



# Three papers on the Development and Contribution of Ideational Frameworks in Russian Politics, 1917-1934 and 1991-2008

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Three papers on the Development and Contribution of Ideational Frameworks in Russian  
Politics, 1917-1934 and 1991-2008

A dissertation presented  
by  
Oliver Craig Bevan  
to  
The Department of Government  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the subject of  
Political Science

Harvard University,  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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## **Three papers on the Development and Contribution of Ideational Frameworks in Russian Politics, 1917-1934 and 1991-2008**

### **Abstract**

The central contention of this dissertation is that political scientists have largely ignored the importance of ideational frameworks for resolving problems of policy-making in times of significant upheaval. In order to illustrate the genesis and contribution of these frameworks, the three papers in my dissertation focus on a diachronic comparison of two moments in Russian history that encapsulate maximal uncertainty, covering the aftermath of the imperial collapses in 1917 and 1991. The first paper focuses on state- and nation-building in the North Caucasus, arguing that the debates between the Bolsheviks and other members of the Second International, particularly Otto Bauer, provided the Bolsheviks with a coherent platform that could largely stem the fissiparous tendencies of the region in a way that Boris Yeltsin and his teams were unable to do in the early 1990s. The second paper examines economic policy and finds the reverse to be true: the economic debates of the Second International largely ignored the problem of the peasantry and the exiled status of many of the leading Bolsheviks meant they were unable to articulate a sufficiently detailed policy to apply to the Russian case. The post-communists under the leadership of Yegor Gaidar, were able to draw on decades of economic research, particularly the Chicago and Virginia Schools, that provided the intellectual rationale for dismembering the Communist command-system, but equally important was the years that Gaidar and his team spent developing an alternative in the twilight years of communism. The final paper considers the legacy of ideational frameworks by considering the rule of Stalin and Putin, arguing that the tasks left unfulfilled provide a basis for regime consolidation by subsequent rulers.

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While this dissertation is the product of the past few years, the roots of my interest in Russia stretch much farther back and I would certainly not have been able to write on the topic without the early encouragement I received from Peter Noll and Michael Collins, Masters of History at Magdalen College School and two of the finest teachers I could have hoped to have. The fact they allowed me to write my A-level coursework on the 1905 Revolution despite being thoroughly unqualified and knowing nothing about the subject speaks to their generosity of spirit and devotion to their craft. They taught me the importance of interrogating primary sources and building a coherent narrative and, to the extent I have been able to do so here, it is no small part thanks to their teaching. My first trip to Russia, with Theodore Holland, took place in early 2003 in the aftermath of the Dubrovka seizure and was my first real exposure to the unresolved issues of the North Caucasus. Though it was not clear to me at the time, the seeds of this project were very much planted at that juncture and I am grateful to my parents for allowing me to embark on a thoroughly ill-advised and life-changing journey.

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For Gwyn Bevan

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# Chapter 1

## Overview

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<sup>0</sup>Thanks to Peter Hall for providing insightful comments on an early draft of this chapter.

## 1.1 Setting the Scene

Periods following the collapse of empires tend to be bedevilled with difficulty, confusion and violence<sup>1</sup>. The end of the Roman Empire resulted in tremendous upheaval and ushered in the Dark Ages in Europe<sup>2</sup>, while the twilight of the great European empires of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries generated countless conflicts and devastation throughout the globe (Hobsbawn, 1987). This is hardly surprising: anyone with even a passing knowledge of recent history would expect the elimination of central authority over large swathes of territory to give rise to serious problems of governance and governability. Moreover, we would also expect contagious levels of violence, as the many suitors for control over the contested land do battle with one another and seek to assert their pre-eminence, often leading to appalling privations for the affected civilian populations. However, while the above sentences highlight the perils of such transitions, there is also near-unmitigated potential for dramatic alterations to the political and social fabric. If these serious problems can be managed, such situations provide an extraordinary opportunity for the new leadership to remake the polity and enact extraordinarily far-reaching reforms in the first years after taking power. Many newly-elected governments talk of mandates or political capital to drive through sweeping changes, but few have the benefits of such a complete *tabula rasa* as those inheriting the now-atomised fragments of empire.

Overcoming these challenges is, of course, a mighty task and one that the vast majority of state- and nation-builders find insuperable. From the post-colonial travails of Africa and Latin America<sup>3</sup> to the sustained chaos that faced Central and Eastern Europe in the

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<sup>1</sup>See Alexander Motyl's work for a fascinating look at the dynamics of imperial rise, decline and ultimate collapse (Motyl, 2002).

<sup>2</sup>Edward Gibbon's monumental work, while surpassed in terms of the rigours of modern scholarship, has yet to be bettered in its account of the chaos and confusion surrounding the collapse of Rome (Gibbon, 1974).

<sup>3</sup>The explosion of recent interest in Africa is to be much welcomed and has finally started to help advance our understanding of the continent; see Reno (2000) for a relatively recent look at the problems facing many of the states in terms of building basic capabilities. Centeno (2002) is of great utility in terms of understanding similar dynamics in Latin America.

aftermath of the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire<sup>4</sup>, many new countries are riven by factionalism and infighting, ethnic conflict and external interference. These combined difficulties make the crafting of effective policy near-impossible, leading to civil wars, plunging levels of social welfare and prolonged instability. Given the gravity of such situations and the exceptionally high stakes, it is rather surprising that as a discipline political science has generally failed to investigate what separates the successes from the failures. To be more specific, the central question facing us when considering this problem is what unites those groups of leaders who have managed to navigate the Scylla of disintegration and the Charybdis of dangerous overcentralisation to found an enduring state<sup>5</sup>? Even those governments that manage to navigate the troubled initial waters often fall at a subsequent hurdle, the fervour and determination of the revolutionary period subsiding to a Thermidorean exhaustion that exposes the fragility of the initial gains and leads to retrenchment and collapse.

My dissertation seeks to develop a response to these questions that marries a marked theoretical advance on the existing literature with substantial empirical findings from a series of paired comparisons in Russian history. The former contribution consists in the development of the concept of ‘ideational frameworks’; these take us beyond the relatively hackneyed field of ideology, orienting our thinking towards how policies are formulated and implemented in environments exhibiting the characteristic of near-complete chaos. We shall develop a useful means for distinguishing between helpful and unhelpful frameworks across two dimensions of strength and flexibility and outline what exactly it means to be ‘successful’ in these terms as well as suggesting critical background conditions for generating better frameworks. Much of the existing literature is either devoted to working within the confines

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<sup>4</sup>See Sked (2001) for a most readable account of these events and the problems unleashed in Europe as a result.

<sup>5</sup>This is a greatly-oversimplified dichotomy, since there are many more dimensions to this problem than merely that of disintegration or overcentralisation. It does not, for example, address the problem of external interference, which is often critical in such moments, nor the question of how to manage the previous regime. Nevertheless, for our purposes it is the most useful lens with which to view these questions and many of the central policy problems can, I argue in the subsequent papers, be reduced to this basic decision without suffering too great a loss of critical detail.

of orthodox methodological strictures or engaging in compelling but rather loose speculations on the impact of ideas on policy; I hope to navigate between these extremes and provide a reasoned and convincing demonstration of how we really can utilise non-tangible factors as explanans. While these discussions are somewhat oversimplified, they provide the basic roadmap for what follows and the only genuine test of the value of said frameworks consists in their empirical applications, which takes place in the three papers that follow.

I acknowledge from the outset that these are complicated and potentially confusing issues and do not seem particularly amenable to resolution by the standard regression analyses that dominate the methodological canons of political science. Indeed, there is good reason to suspect that the appeal to purely material factors is liable to be of only limited utility in attempting to uncover satisfactory answers to questions that are essentially rooted in examining the making of policy given conditions of serious and sustained uncertainty. While not seeking to contest the claim that conditions on the ground exert a strong pull over the direction of particular governmental decisions, an account that focused solely on such factors would be intellectually unsatisfying because current material circumstances are not *eo ipso* sufficient to explain the programmatic platforms (or absence of such) that provide answers to the questions posed in the opening paragraph. One compelling alternative is to conduct deep historical investigations that interrogate previous trajectories to try and identify path dependencies that make certain outcomes more likely than others<sup>6</sup>. While this generally generates revealing and subtle hypotheses, for the questions posed above such an approach is flawed due to the fundamental break with the past given the nature of the imperial collapses in 1917 and 1991. This is not to rule out the importance of legacies, merely to argue that they are perhaps not the driving factor behind subsequent decisions of governance. It is my contention that if we are to provide compelling answers to the questions outlined above, we need to consider other factors and approaches that are somewhat at odds with standard research in contemporary social science.

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<sup>6</sup>See Paul Pierson's work for a compelling account of how to do just this (Pierson, 2004).



As stressed above, my dissertation is an attempt to explore just one such alternative factor, namely the role of ideas. As I shall argue at greater length subsequently (and seek to demonstrate in the three papers that constitute this dissertation), focusing on how ideas influence policy outcomes has major methodological and epistemological benefits in political science. Studying ideational debates between the central policy players provides critical information on how and why decisions were made and why certain policies were accepted or rejected. Often, as we shall see, the evidence utilised is indeed that these ideas are more consonant with expectations of future material developments, but this is far from always the case, especially in revolutionary periods where ideological perspectives are accorded significant weight. At a deeper level, preexisting ideas help to shape perceptions of reality and can lead to markedly differing assessments of current conditions (we see this especially in debates over early Soviet economic policy). Finally, under conditions of radical uncertainty (such as we see during the periods immediately following imperial collapse) those with preconceived notions of how to navigate particular difficulties are often the ones who are able to exploit and reshape the political and social environment, leaving the pragmatists in their wake. This is especially the case when the policy proposals could be strongly linked to an underlying philosophy of rule, such as the connecting of local development with Leninist anti-imperialism, or neoliberal policies with Yeltsin's putative democratic streak and shift away from the communist past.

Much of the theory will be elaborated in the three papers, below, since I am aware this is rather intangible and will only become clearer once we add some empirical clout to these speculations. However, it is important to say something here in order to illustrate the theoretical foundation on which all is constructed. The first question revolves around the type of framework which proves helpful in resolving the chaotic periods following imperial collapse (or, we may reasonably expect, periods of great crisis in general). We shall see in our papers that the truly compelling frameworks must strike a balance between being overly flexible in their application and resulting recommendations and becoming so fixed

that they approach the status of dogma. While there is clearly a spectrum here, for ease of tractability we can identify these two types as pernicious, while (to invoke Aristotle's golden mean) the powerful frameworks have enough rigidity to guide proponents through the initial dark and uncertain nights whilst possessing sufficient flexibility to allow for some degree of modification as material circumstances become clearer.

In order to facilitate empirical and conceptual tractability, my project focuses its attention on three diachronic comparisons from a single geographical location. While I believe there is tremendous potential for extending the scope of this work, it seems sensible to devote energy primarily to outlining and testing the main theoretical propositions at this initial stage. Each comparison constitutes a single paper and consists in contrasting the early years of the Soviet Union with the initial period of postcommunist Russia in order to understand how and why leaderships respond well or poorly to a tripartite challenge of governance. The first two components of this examine how new leaders address the issues of statehood and root-and-branch economic reform, while the third considers how they work to consolidate these gains in the post-revolutionary period. I dedicate a paper to each of these three topics, demonstrating how they help us to understand and further our knowledge in relation to the overarching issues outlined in the opening two paragraphs here. The benefits of these series of diachronic comparisons allow me to hold constant many factors and variables that could potentially muddy the analytical waters, enabling me to focus on constructing a compelling theory that can be tested in other locales by future scholars.

The first of these papers focuses on questions pertaining to state- and nation-building in the fissiparous region of the North Caucasus. The central question is why the Bolsheviks were largely able to resolve the basic problems of order in the region while the post-Soviet government of Boris Yeltsin failed to impose any kind of coherent policy, leading to war and widespread instability. We shall find that the debates between leading Bolsheviks (particularly Stalin and Lenin) and members of the Second International (particularly Otto Bauer) prove instrumental in helping the Bolsheviks to develop a relatively coherent platform cen-

tred on support for local development in the confines of Soviet power. Yeltsin's team had no such framework and made a series of compromises that would prove self-defeating and internally contradictory, generating the First Chechen War and stunting the limited prospects for economic development in the region. In the second paper, I direct my attention to the crafting of economic policy in the initial years following the assumption of power in the aftermath of imperial collapse and we find a marked switch in the aptitude of the two governments. In particular, I ask why was the economic policy of the Bolsheviks, whose Marxist ideology was predicated on the assumption of the overweening importance of the realm of economics, so riddled with uncertainty in the years immediately following their usurpation of power. By way of contrast, why was the first post-Soviet government of Boris Yeltsin so committed to a particular neoliberal policy programme given the pragmatism evident in many other areas of arguably no-lessor importance (such as foreign policy and statebuilding)? The final topic I address relates to consolidation and compromise, contrasting the industrial development encapsulated by Stalin's 'socialism in one country' with the Putin government's focus on étatisation as a solution to all the woes facing the modern Russian state. The central argument in this paper is that the tasks left unfinished by the first generation often provide critical ideational leverage for those that follow, meaning that we must pay great attention to the weaknesses and lacunae of any given ideational framework in order to assess its long-term impact. I outline each of the three papers in more depth in the concluding section of this introductory chapter.

This précis of the dissertation is structured in the following fashion. The first section provides a broad overview of the recent literature on ideas in political science, emphasising the extent to which works on non-material factors either deviate from accepted models of explanation or draw extensively on rational-choice logic to further the analysis. In highlighting this unfortunate trend, I hope to outline the need for a more comprehensive understanding of how ideational factors impact policy. The second section outlines the foundational theory that underlies the three papers, considering the wide variety of work on ideas in politics and

seeking to generate a common rubric that can be used in subsequent analysis through the elaboration of ‘ideational frameworks’. The final section provides an overview of the three papers that constitute the dissertation, walking through their major claims and what they contribute to the overall project.

## 1.2 Ideas in Politics

The primary theoretical contribution of my thesis is to provide greater structure to the form in which political scientists generally conceptualise the impact of ideas on social and political outcomes. The means by which I hope to achieve this are contained in a later section, where I turn to the concept of ideational frameworks. I claim that these provide a more concrete form for these discussions than has generally been the case and, perhaps most importantly, generates a basis for evaluating the relative prospects of leading ideas in an *ex ante* fashion. For the moment, however, we turn our attention to the uneven literature on non-material factors in political science. As we shall see in this section, while there has recently been a minor resurgence of works devoted to demonstrating the value of such factors as explanans in political science, these typically seek to shoehorn ideational factors into pre-existing methodological schemata, through a dependence on either causal or rationalist logic. This blunts the worth of such enquiries, for ideas are notoriously hard to measure and their impact challenging *in extremis* to demonstrate when attempting to adhere to standard methodological strictures. The upshot of these attempts is a curtailment in the kinds of questions we can seek to ask and a corresponding drop in the level of creativity in the discipline. While I think the move to greater epistemological pluralism in political science is something that should be unreservedly welcomed, the lack of a corresponding methodological pluralism threatens to undermine these protean advances and reduce this style of explanation to very much a second-tier alternative. The implication is that ideational factors are something to which one turns when the standard empirical approaches are unsatisfying, unconvincing or unusable.

Needless to say, my project is predicated on a rejection of this proposition, but we should explicate it more fully before turning to my proposed remedy.

In broad terms, it is fair to say that political science as a discipline has evinced a great deal of scepticism toward the explanatory validity of ideational factors<sup>7</sup>. In part, I suspect this is a legacy of the behaviouralist revolution and the general distrust of explanans that could not be clearly linked to empirically-verifiable phenomena. This attitude towards the importance of empirical referents has a distinguished pedigree and was a core principle of the ‘Logical Positivist’ school, which is often seen as one of the main origins of behaviouralism (Smith, 1986)<sup>8</sup>. Its historical roots date to Auguste Comte’s belief that the French Revolution was perverted by the first generation’s obsession with ideas rather than practical science (Comte, 1998), but it received perhaps its most famous articulation in Karl Popper’s notion of the necessity for acceptable theories to be empirically falsifiable (Popper, 1965). However, this focus on behaviouralism and the reliance on a particular method is not an entirely satisfying account of the problem at hand both because it ignores the extent of contestation around the suitability of behaviouralism in the social sciences<sup>9</sup>, but more importantly because it denies agency to those seeking to articulate the value of non-material factors and casts them as tied to the mast of their colleagues’ past methodological choices.

Before delving further into this point, we need to consider what ideational arguments can add to our understanding of socio-political processes and events. If we cannot provide a *prima facie* defence of these kind of factors and highlight their independent value, then the adherents to orthodox methodological postulates will be entirely correct in their insistence of the value of focusing on more standard empirical analyses and will have no case to answer.

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<sup>7</sup>Political science is certainly not alone among the social sciences in harbouring this methodological antagonism directed against non-material factors. The second paper in this dissertation will demonstrate that economics is also similarly disinclined to consider such explanations.

<sup>8</sup>The logical positivists displayed heroic intellectual integrity by disbanding themselves upon realising that the core proposition governing their activities, that all meaningful statements must be empirically testable, was impossible to demonstrate using their accepted standard of proof.

<sup>9</sup>See Rosenberg (1995) for an overview of contemporary debates on this topic. For a demonstration of the fact that behaviouralism is still very much alive and continuing to exert a strong influence on recent social science research, see Niedenzu, Meleghy and Meyer (2008).

Happily for our present endeavour, this is not the case. In fact, we can identify three means by which ideas can be utilised to advance our understanding; while all are (almost of necessity) closely related, they are analytically distinct and each provides a critical means of investigating matters that are poorly treated by standard empirical models. In the course of outlining the three contributions, I shall draw on existing literatures that illustrate the central points at issue; we shall have cause to return to certain parts of this literature when we discuss in more detail the response to the methodological objections.

The first of these contributions is perhaps the broadest and most ill-defined and for that reason it thus provides relatively little ballast against the charges of mainstream methodologists. Nevertheless, it has generated important and fascinating insights into the nature of socio-political processes and deserves recognition here. Generally speaking, the work that falls under this category highlights the relationship between regime and society and identifies critical points of tension and modes of control that go far beyond the simple reliance on coercion on which classic studies of autocracy tended to rely<sup>10</sup> Although this is a particularly underdeveloped and neglected area of research in evaluating state actions (and arguably in political science more broadly), recent years have seen scholars working in empirical political science attempt to engage seriously with these kind of questions. Lisa Wedeen's work on the strange cult of personality of Bashar al-Assad in authoritarian Syria provides perhaps the best example of a modern study that seeks to utilise such an approach. In this case, Assad's cult does not seem to generate legitimacy in the classic sense of people subscribing to the message the cult promulgates and evincing genuine belief/faith, but generates 'symbolic power' that transmits specific messages about the latent coercive capacity of the regime by forcing people to engage in bizarre rituals, stabilising and reinforcing the regime

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<sup>10</sup>Merle Fainsod's study of the Stalinist system is perhaps the most famous in this style (Fainsod, 1963), although it is by no means exceptional and there is much of value in this work in terms of its detailed attention to the basic mechanics of rule. Sheila Fitzpatrick's semi-autobiographical piece attempting to fight against this general tendency in Russian studies is perhaps the best introduction to the historiographical struggles that pertain to this point (Fitzpatrick, 2008).

(Wedeen, 1999)<sup>11</sup>. The other prominent strand of literature that falls under this general heading relates to ideas concerning national identity, brought most firmly into the political science cannon by Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson (Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1991). Gellner and Anderson certainly invoked material factors (such as the development of the printing press) in their work, but it proved impossible to discuss in entirely non-ideational terms while doing justice to the complexity of the underlying process. Laura Adams' recent work on Uzbekistan demonstrates the value of integrating an understanding of nationalism with support for an authoritarian regime (Adams, 2010).

The second field in which non-material factors can prove their independent worth pertains to questions of the transmission of influential movements in either a geographic or temporal sense. This is typified by the work on 'waves' and diffusion in terms of the promotion and promulgation of common reactions to diverse events in a variety of settings. The most common application of this is in the field of revolution, be it Kurt Weyland's pioneering study of the events of 1848 and the Arab Spring (Weyland, 2009, 2012), or Mark Beissinger's work on the rise of nationalism during the twilight years of the Soviet Union and the Colour Revolutions of the mid-2000s (Beissinger, 2002, 2009). The underlying thesis of these type of diffusion arguments is that it is impossible to explain the patterns of behaviour by appeal to purely material factors<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps the most coherent programme that has sought to explicate this phenomenon is that work on epistemic communities in the field of international relations, pioneered by Peter Haas and his group of scholars (Haas, 1992)<sup>13</sup>. Epistemic communities focuses on understanding the dynamics of international policy cooperation and coordination by seeking to identify shared characteristics between leading bureaucrats, including such seemingly abstract notions as a common understanding of the nature of causation. This has

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<sup>11</sup>Given recent events in the Arab world, it is becoming increasingly clear that Assad's ruling strategy was not invulnerable. However, it remains the case that it was remarkably effective for a number of years.

<sup>12</sup>For an attempt to do just this in the Colour Revolutions, see Way (2008), who argues that it was more a case of authoritarian weakness in all of the relevant countries than the diffusion of a central idea.

<sup>13</sup>The journal issue featuring this article by Haas was devoted entirely to epistemic communities and effectively launched the research programme.

typically lent itself to applications in rather technical areas<sup>14</sup>, but the potential for advancing our understanding of the dynamics of policy formulation offered by such an approach is much greater than if we rely purely on standard material explanations.

The final area in which ideational factors offer a marked improvement over purely materialist explanations is in aiding our understanding of the selection of policies during times of great uncertainty. As this is so close to my interest and is the area in which I shall focus on making a theoretical contribution, I shall save serious elaboration of these points for the next section. However, it is perhaps not surprising that a considerable amount of recent work has been devoted to this topic. Thus, Sheri Berman's investigation of early twentieth-century European socialist parties as generators and propagators of social democracy is an excellent example of how to integrate a fine analysis of ideas with a demonstration of their real-world impact during intensely troubled times (Berman, 2006). In terms of analysing events in the postcommunist space, Keith Darden and Stephen Hanson have been vocal advocates for assigning greater prominence to the role of ideational factors in influencing outcomes during periods of significant instability. Hanson has written two monographs on this subject, the first detailing the importance of the debates over Marxism with regards to institutional design in the Soviet Union (Hanson, 1997), the second arguing that the absence of a coherent ideology in postcommunist Russia explains the failure to develop strong parties in that country (Hanson, 2010). Building on the excellent foundations erected by Peter Hall (Hall, 1993), Keith Darden's work continues and contributes to a long and well-established literature on the role economic ideas play with regard to political decisions, albeit applying them in a new setting to explain the different choices regarding international institutions made by the post-Soviet states (Darden, 2009). This is an area in which purely materialist explanations struggle due to their inherent equifinality<sup>15</sup> and the implicit determinism that most statistical approaches impose on events *post hoc*, notwithstanding the standard error

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<sup>14</sup>See Irvine, Cooper and Moerman (2011) and Salvador and Ramío (2011) for recent examples.

<sup>15</sup>This was first articulated by Charles Ragin (Ragin, 1987), but has been further developed by Stryker (1996) and Braumoeller (2003).



included in most estimates<sup>16</sup>.

We could spend more time elaborating these points, but my hope is that the above paragraphs have at least convinced the reader that there is a case to be put in defence of non-material factors contributing to our discussion and investigation of many questions in political science. We can now proceed to outline the methodological case for why it is rather difficult to conduct research using these as genuine explanatory factors. After this, we shall launch our counterargument and then proceed, in the next section, to my project's contribution.

Speaking in general terms on the topic of non-material explanans, it seems fair to argue that in political science most scholars seem to follow the analogous advice of Samuel Huntington with regards to legitimacy when he notes that it is 'a mushy concept that political analysts do well to avoid' (Huntington, 1991, 46)<sup>17</sup>. The intellectual position of denigrating the independent importance of ideational factors has great historical pedigree; Marx advanced a particularly succinct version of the materialist critique of the role of ideas in *The Communist Manifesto* when he claimed that, 'The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class', which are in turn determined by control of the means of production and their economic interests (Marx and Engels, 1967, 102)<sup>18</sup>. Even those sympathetic to the importance of ideational factors in influencing outcomes acknowledge that their significance is likely to vary across historical periods. Mark Blyth provides an excellent example of this perspective in claiming that economic ideas influence institutional change through two mechanisms: they are both important for understanding how agents form and understand their interests in periods of radical 'Knightian' uncertainty (where uncertainty cannot be reduced

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<sup>16</sup>Bayesian techniques offer a compelling alternative to the more standard frequentist approach but are rather slow in gaining adherents. Simon Jackman and Andrew Gelman are the leading exponents of this technique in political science.

<sup>17</sup>The irony of this statement is that Huntington then uses the collapsing legitimacy of authoritarian regimes as one of the five central explanatory variables driving the third wave of democratisation.

<sup>18</sup>For my project, Marx's dismissal of the independent impact of ideas is somewhat disheartening since I want to argue that Marxism did play an important role in guiding Soviet state-building and economic policies, but I think there is sufficient evidence to cast doubt on the veracity of his claim.

to risk) and crisis and, more importantly, for conceptualising the very nature of a crisis. However, in periods of stability, the prominence of ideational factors recede and alternative features tend to dominate our explanations of political outcomes (Blyth, 2002). We shall have more to say on this point when developing the concept of ideational frameworks.

The position that there is one primary appropriate means of knowledge creation in political science generates an unfortunate schism in terms of the kinds of research that are lauded or rejected. It encourages us to ignore important findings in anthropology and history and pushes us to embrace experimental work in psychology and economics, or advances in statistical methods that enable us to do ever more with our existing data<sup>19</sup>, stripping away the methodological pluralism that generated the most compelling work of the 1950s and 1960s<sup>20</sup>. There are authors working on the intersection of disciplines, such as Lisa Wedeen and Laura Adams (and, before his death, the rejector of disciplines *par excellence*, Charles Tilly), but they are rare and given the increasing specialisation inherent in the production of academic knowledge, this is an unpromising path for future scholars to attempt to follow. It would thus be markedly preferable to launch a defence of methodological pluralism within the confines of political science and demonstrate that we can generate findings of interest without bowing to the supervenience of methodology on epistemology. We must first grasp the nature of the mainstream position on this question.

In order to understand the general tenor of the orthodox critique, we turn to perhaps the most influential work on political-science methodology of the past thirty years, King, Keonhane and Verba's *Designing Social Enquiry*. This work was an attempt to ensure that

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<sup>19</sup>This is not to deny the importance of these results; Rose McDermott in particular has demonstrated how helpful psychological research can be for those working in international relations (McDermott, 2004). The point is rather that this should not be privileged to the extent it has been of late but rather viewed as one of many potentially fruitful avenues for research.

<sup>20</sup>Barrington Moore's study remains the *sine qua non* in this regard (Moore Jr., 1966). Recent work in the discipline has been more willing to accept the importance of genuine historical work, as catalogued in McDonald (1996). Putnam's classic study of the development of civic culture in Italy reveals the gains that can follow from this kind of investigation (Putnam, 1993), while Ziblatt gleaned new insights concerning federalism based on his historical knowledge of German and Italian unification in the nineteenth century (Ziblatt, 2006).

both qualitative and quantitative work in the discipline used similar standards of proof and argumentation and thus to raise the general calibre of argument. This broad aim was undeniably welcome, but the central contention of the work was that the only acceptable means for advancing explanations was through a rather narrow concept of causality that was undeniably more suited to frequentist statistics than qualitative research<sup>21</sup>, relying as it did on the notion of replicability. King *et al.* sum up the problems facing the scholar seeking to make a causal claim with regard to ideational factors, as viewed through the standard methodological lens: ‘The most difficult methodological task in studying the impact of ideas on policy is compensating for the closely related problems of omitted variable bias and endogeneity as they affect a given research problem’ (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994, 191). Both of these methodological concerns arise from the temporal proximity of ideas to events themselves: ideas could be reflections of underlying material/structural factors (which would also be the Marxist position that the base determines the superstructure), or they could be post-hoc rationalisations of decisions made on other (usually material) grounds. King *et al.* argue that in order to establish a causal claim, we need a well-posed counterfactual<sup>22</sup> in which relevant individuals held different ideas and we can trace the influence of these ideational factors to differences in the dependent variable. This is the tenor of the general critique of those who seek to use non-material factors as explanatory tools in their understanding of political outcomes and while somewhat simplified, it provides the outline of the challenge for scholars working with ideational factors.

There are three principal responses to this basic problem that have been embraced by scholars examining the workings of non-material factors. Two are inherently problematic, for reasons that should be immediately apparent from their descriptions; one ignores the problem completely while the other cedes too much ground to the critic. The final alternative is the one I propose to use in this dissertation and requires us to accept that causal claims (so

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<sup>21</sup>For a critical response to this general position, see Brady and Collier (2004).

<sup>22</sup>For a discussion of the importance of counterfactuals in qualitative research that is much more general, see Fearon (1991).

narrowly construed) are not the sole basis for knowledge generation in the form standardly understood in political science. But first we consider the options.

The first of these is to relinquish much hope of providing a convincing connection between ideational factors and socio-political outcomes and err on the side either of description or broad generalities with limited empirical support. This is arguably the approach of Samuel Huntington with regard to his civilisational thesis and also Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's discussion of the 'civic culture' (Huntington, 1996; Almond and Verba, 1963). The implication is that non-material factors belong to a rather different realm of analysis than the more generally accepted forms of empirical data in political science. This amounts to accepting defeat and forgoing the goal of utilising ideational factors as a powerful explanatory tool and is clearly unsuitable for any serious practitioner of social science who works in this realm<sup>23</sup>. It would prevent a continuation of the any of the literatures outlined in our defence of the worth of non-material explanations and is therefore a distinctly unpromising response to the conundrum outlined above.

The second stance is to accept the methodological hegemony of causal analysis and attempt to fit the analysis of ideational factors into this narrow rubric. Because this is the dominant trend in recent work in this area, we shall devote more space to this than to the first or third of our alternatives. This approach has received its fullest defence in the work of Craig Parsons, who has devoted much energy to demonstrating precisely how ideational variables can be shoehorned into orthodox causal accounts (Parsons, 2002, 2007). In a recent paper, Parsons has attempted to demonstrate how debates among central policy-makers in the countries that would form the core of the European Union resulted in the latter organisation's development (Parsons, 2002). This style of analysis fits closely with the epistemic communities literature outlined above, in that it attempts to find common (non-material) factors among central actors and demonstrates how they decisively affected

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<sup>23</sup>The obvious exceptions are works of intellectual history, whose mode of explanation is generally (though not exclusively) divorced from empirical concerns. When these are part of political science, they usually belong more correctly to the realm of political theory and shall not detain us further.

outcomes. It thus seeks to provide a convincing response to King *et al.*'s two principal challenges concerning omitted-variable bias and endogeneity by attempting to hold constant a number of extraneous factors and clarifying the causal chain connecting ideas and outcomes.

The dominant methodological choice for those engaged in this kind of methodological enterprise is undoubtedly process tracing. Although there are some debates as to what exactly constitutes process tracing, the basic idea has been well-expressed by James Mahoney when he describes it as 'the effort to infer causality through the identification of causal mechanisms' (Mahoney, 2000, 412), or as Sydney Tarrow has stated, a technique that allows scholars to 'identify the reasons for the emergence of a particular decision through the dynamic of events' (Tarrow, 1995, 472). Although this may seem unhelpfully abstract, the basic approach is not dissimilar from standard statistical approaches: we make predictions based on theoretical expectations of how individuals should behave, we gather data that pertains to this behaviour<sup>24</sup> and we check whether our predictions are confirmed<sup>25</sup>. Nathaniel Beck was caustically (and justifiably) critical of this particular method, arguing that it is simply unable to distinguish between alternative hypotheses, which must be one of the central strengths of any credible technique for social science (Beck, 2006). Peter Hall attempted to respond to this type of criticism by developing 'systematic process analysis', drawing on the ideas of Imre Lakatos that any serious empirical study must be an assessment of how two competing theories can account for the relevant data (Hall, 2008), representing an important development and forcing qualitative scholars to think much more carefully about the relationship between their own and rival accounts of political phenomena.

Alternatively, scholars seeking to adhere to orthodox methodological strictures can turn to game-theoretic logic to illuminate the benefits of non-material factors in crafting explanations. Actual practitioners of game theory usually view such features of the political

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<sup>24</sup>This data is often of the form of speeches or diary entries that reflect how individuals are framing/justifying their actions.

<sup>25</sup>For two examples of this, see John Owen's work on how beliefs in liberal democracy promote peace and Keith Darden and Anna Grzymala-Busse's analysis of how literacy contributed to the collapse of communism in countries due to its contribution to nationalism (Owen, 1994; Darden and Grzymala-Busse, 2006).

environment as little more than ‘cheap talk’ with no genuine bearing on any determinants of the outcome of interest. This position entails that unless there are material factors underlying the more abstract propositions, they are not to be taken seriously in terms of their influence on decision-making or political outcomes more generally. I set aside the meta-theoretical point that underlying game theory is a particular view of human nature revolving around rationality<sup>26</sup>. This hardly seems promising territory for launching an investigation with non-material factors as one of the critical components of an explanation, but somewhat surprisingly, scholars have indeed pursued this. Stephen Hanson provides the most recent example; in his work on post-imperial democracies he claims that the main benefit of powerful ideas is to extend the time-horizons of the relevant players, making them far less likely to bring down the party system due to expectations of delayed benefits (Hanson, 2010). This is very similar to the logic of Beatriz Magaloni’s work on the hegemony of the PRI in twentieth-century Mexico (Magaloni, 2006). While such works are partially convincing, the decision to use such rationalist logic means that this approach entails a similar trap to the one explicated above. In particular, it greatly blunts the breadth and type of explanations we can offer, because we must always seek to understand how ideas affect the relevant players’ evaluation of outcomes. But there are a multitude of potential factors that influence this judgement, meaning that ideas are but one of a smörgasbörd of options when we look to interrogate these kind of questions.

The final approach is the most promising in terms of generating an independent methodological justification for focusing on non-material factors as viable explanators. The basis for this position consists in an epistemological stance derived from the Weberian ‘*verstehen*’ school that identifying causal mechanisms is a separate enterprise from explanation, and one that has independent value<sup>27</sup>. I eschew Parsons’ attempts to demonstrate causal validity, as I believe these implicate the proponents of ideational factors in an epistemological trap that

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<sup>26</sup>For a critique of this see Sen (1977), among others.

<sup>27</sup>See Bunge (1997) for a more detailed explanation of this point.

is wholly unsuited to their core concerns. Parsons' concern is solely focused on linking ideas with concrete outcomes (in particular, with specific decisions made), but this is only one of the means by which ideas can influence empirical outcomes, and by no means the most interesting when we think of their ability to resolve crises. As we have already outlined, the problems facing leadership in this dissertation go far deeper than debates over a single policy or concerns over a simple decision. By focusing on situations that are characterised by an extreme form of 'Knightian' uncertainty (more on this in the next section), we enter a sphere of analysis that places an entirely different set of demands on both the actors involved and the types of questions we can ask of them. Indeed, it is hard to overstate the manner in which this concept forces a re-evaluation of the standard rational model inherent in much political analysis. This takes us beyond existing modifications of rational choice, such as bounded rationality theory or important work on the consequence of imperfect information on decision-making, to a fundamental consideration of how to make coherent choices when we are unsure of not only the link between our decisions and payoffs but what the actual set of potential outcomes contains. It thus also demands more of our explanations than that they simply fold into a rationalist framework, which was our critique of the work of Stephen Hanson and those who seek to restrict themselves to this tradition.

This also forces us to reconsider the standard of empirical proof that is appropriate, since (and here we depart from Parsons' claims) it should be clear that a breakdown of the necessary components for causal reasoning supervenes on our ability to assess them using standard causal analysis. Rather than look for evidence of ideas causally impacting the external surroundings of the major actors, we are concerned with how frameworks structure their thinking and influence the formulation and crafting of policy. The link is internal and yet, much like Immanuel Kant's response to Hume's puzzle of causation, it is both interesting and extremely important. For that reason, our primary evidence will be on debates, speeches, writings and the professed prior justifications for policy (to avoid post-hoc rationalisation, as much as is possible), rather than seeking to engage in the kind of analysis that Parsons

argues is necessary to prove causation. We are not seeking to divorce our analysis from the material realm, but merely illustrate that impact can be demonstrated in more than one fashion.

Having walked through the somewhat tangled mess of the literature on non-material factors and the debate over their acceptability (or otherwise) as explanans, we are now in a position to advance the central theory of the dissertation.

### 1.3 Ideational Frameworks

Having referred to the primary theoretical innovation of the dissertation throughout this paper, it is now time to delve further into what exactly we mean by ‘ideational frameworks’ and how they contribute to advancing the basis upon which we can make non-material explanations. The most basic definitional issue obviously involves ‘idea’, or ‘ideational framework’, a term that is at the heart of this project. As with most abstract notions, this has a wide range of meanings, from a purely ephemeral thought to a developed and elaborate schemata. In order to conduct the type of analysis required given our methodological position outlined above, we must focus on more developed and elaborate conceptualisations that are subject to debate and contestation and that provide a framework for utilising and organising information, especially given our concern with crises. From a practical perspective, it is extremely difficult to investigate the impact of fleeting discussions or thoughts as the sources of these are prone to be either unreliable or rather scanty<sup>28</sup>.

Ideational frameworks undeniably bear a resemblance to ideology, in that they are a developed system that their proponents use to understand and simplify the complexities of socio-political reality. There is, however, a critical difference between ideational frameworks and ideology. The latter presupposes a rather fixed and ossified lens through which events are

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<sup>28</sup>This is one of the more compelling arguments against launching a scholarly enquiry investigating the role of pragmatic thought. It is near-impossible to gather the necessary information to make a developed argument that ‘muddling through’ a crisis is what the relevant policy-makers were doing, notwithstanding the recent best efforts of the assembled leadership of the European Union.



interpreted and is frequently linked to markedly abstract debates and byzantine arguments over matters of seemingly little consequence for the uninitiated. Ideational frameworks, by contrast, are geared primarily towards formulating policies and designing means for their implementation. As we shall see, extended debates are critical for developing successful frameworks, for this marks them as distinct from the pragmatic techniques used by many politicians in times of crisis. But they must also have a degree of flexibility and local applicability that is foreign to our standard notions of ideology; this practical aspect is an essential component of understanding why certain frameworks enjoy success while others fail.

This draws us into a discussion of the nature of success and how we evaluate this with regard such frameworks. As I outlined in the introductory part of this paper, my attention in this project is focused on times of severe crisis, characterised by absolute chaos. To be more specific, for our purposes the situation must involve ‘Knightian uncertainty’, a concept invoked by Mark Blyth in his study of economic policy but that draws on the work of Frank Knight, the famous Chicago economist to whose work we shall have cause to return in the paper on economic policy. As Blyth elegantly summarises, the central distinction between Knightian and more standard forms of uncertainty lies in the fact that in the former “agents can have no conception as to what possible outcomes are likely, and hence what their interests in such a situation in fact are” (Blyth, 2002, 32). This is a radical departure from the standard behaviouralist conception of how individuals act because in this case, the simple causal story we can usually construct connecting preferences with outcomes via revealed preference theory is unavailable; the inherent uncertainty over outcomes makes it even more obvious that backwards induction from outcome to preference is a logical fallacy that violates basic rules of temporal logic.

In these kind of situations, what agents must do to resolve this uncertainty is rely on a non-material form of motivation due to the effective breakdown in the standard model of incentivisation that connects actions with material outcomes. In my dissertation, as I hope

is clear by this juncture, I argue strongly that ideas are the most compelling alternative since they provide a means of creating order that is not purely outcome-driven. This is a direct counterargument to both the materialist ontology that is pre-eminent in much of the social sciences and the causal claims that are parasitic on such an understanding. I further claim that periods of imperial collapse are excellent examples of Knightian uncertainty and that those leaders with a compelling ideational framework heading into the collapse are in a far stronger position to develop coherent responses that can navigate such a period.

This has a direct bearing on our notion of success and failure. Given our focus on crises, it would be anachronistic to consider the situation in a country many years after the period in question and use that to evaluate the initial decisions made. For example, the fact that nationalist mobilisation was arguably central to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has no real implications for our judgement on the decisions made by Lenin and Stalin in the initial years after the November Revolution. What is more sensible is to determine whether *at the time* of the enacting of the relevant policy, it displayed the characteristics of coherence and, perhaps most importantly, was a justified response to the complexities of the situation at hand. This means that the evidence we use should be the debates between leading figures and the questions over implementation, rather than utilising subsequent data that was unavailable at the time. This latter approach fits with the standard orthodoxy in terms of its methodological approach but fails to grasp the nature of Knightian uncertainty and thus greatly impoverishes our understanding of such situations by lending them a clarity that is only apparent *post hoc*.

There are three core objectives for my project regarding the central theoretical contribution. The first is to provide a mechanism for identifying the sorts of frameworks that prove useful in times of crisis. We should certainly not expect that any and all ideational frameworks are of equal utility, for this is so evidently problematic that an empirical refutation is barely needed. The second, no less important, step is to understand how these ideas are developed and what kind of processes help turn poorly formulated notions into robust

frameworks able to consistently help navigate periods of dramatic uncertainty. The final goal is to provide a discussion of how to identify weaknesses in the frameworks, for as we shall see in the papers, neither the Bolsheviks nor their successors were able to develop frameworks sufficiently comprehensive to overcome all the challenges of post-imperial transition. However, at a very basic level we must also rebut the charge that this central contention of this project is so obvious that it reduces to a mere triviality. It is hardly surprising that groups with a well-defined ideational framework are better equipped to navigate conditions of extreme uncertainty, so what are we really trying to demonstrate here?

There are two possible responses to the suggestion that the central contention of this project is blindingly obvious. The first is to challenge the claim *prima facie*, which would involve demonstrating that in certain types of crises, situational creativity is preferable to reliance on a committed doctrine. At its most abstract, this reduces to the debate between system builders and pragmatists, which found its classical expression in Nietzsche's dismissal of Spinoza, although John Dewey's work is the most intellectually satisfying account of the merits of pragmatism. Proponents of this argument would have to demonstrate that there are specific cases of response to a crisis that rely on ad-hoc actions, not simply replacing an inherited system of thought with an alternative that is equally well developed. This is a demanding requirement in cases of policy formulation, since we usually assume that the niceties of policy demand careful planning and a certain level of consistency that is most effectively underwritten by something approaching an ideology and cases of genuine ad-hoc invention are conspicuous by their absence. There is scope for investigating this in greater detail, since the essence of crises is to force reevaluations of very basic assumptions that may prompt inventiveness and unorthodox solutions that deviate from acknowledged pathways. This is not, however, the direction in which my dissertation will proceed, although the process of thinking through the types of circumstances in which established ideas can be beneficial or harmful is an important aspect of the theoretical foundations of my project.

Instead, I choose to pursue the second avenue, which is to accept the broad claim outlined

above but argue that it is so general as to be unhelpful. Telling us that frameworks in general are helpful in formulating policy is such a contentless assertion that it approaches meaninglessness. My dissertation is interested in uncovering which kinds of ideas are useful, what are the origins of these ideas (or more precisely, how they developed) and when these ideas are likely to be perverted or distorted to the point when they impede policy making in times of crisis, generating answers that are either infeasible or morally problematic. It is only by investigating the details of these questions that we can hope to arrive at satisfactory answers that will inform our responses to the three questions outlined above.

Thus, as the first two papers will demonstrate, certain frameworks are well positioned to resolve specific problems, meaning that we should not expect any one framework to be able to move elegantly and easily through all the policy challenges that are immanent in the immediate post-imperial period. The Bolsheviks' heated pre-revolutionary debates over nationalities meant they responded well to the challenges of state-building on the fractious periphery while the post-communists, who had nothing of the sort, floundered. However, the roles are reversed when it comes to questions of economic policy - here the post-communists were able to draw on the emergence of neoliberalism as a near-hegemonic doctrine to inaugurate dramatic capitalist reforms while the Bolsheviks were somewhat paralysed by inheriting an underindustrialised country on its knees following World War One. The jumble of policies that resulted, from War Communism to the New Economic Policy and finally full-scale centralisation, is thus hardly surprising, but one that is best understood through the lens of ideational frameworks.

The first and second papers identify two necessary conditions for a framework to succeed in resolving the problems of a particular policy area. The first of these is that the framework must be sufficiently well developed to generate coherent and consistent responses to the problem at hand. Boris Yeltsin's pragmatic approach to state-building in the 1990s, for example, generated a confusing *mélange* of policies that lacked a solid underlying logic and thus multiplied, rather than resolved, the problems of governance in the North Caucasus.

This dimension of clarity stems from debates over central questions, which was highlighted in the above paragraph. The second critical component is one of flexibility, which we take here to mean the ability to adjust an existing framework to local conditions. The most obvious contrast here is between the early Bolsheviks and the early post-communists in the realm of economics. We have seen above that the Bolsheviks were unprepared to assume the reins of the economy in 1917 and in the second paper I demonstrate that this was in large part because the theoretical edifice of Marxism (even as adjusted by Lenin and Bukharin) left them unprepared to manage an overwhelmingly rural economy where the peasantry remained a powerful social group. I argue this situation arose both because of the inflexibility of Marxism on the question of economic management and because leading Bolsheviks spent the years leading up to the November Revolution in exile and were not forced to confront the realities of the situation in Russia until it was too late. By way of contrast, Yegor Gaidar and his team were able to devote many months to studying how the Soviet economy should be reformed prior to the collapse in 1991. While neoliberalism provided an invaluable framework, their knowledge of the specifics of the Soviet economy and the situation in Russia in the aftermath of the collapse allowed them to tailor their recommendations and design a more bespoke reform strategy that maximised the chances of success.

The second motivating problem is understanding how vague ideas become ideational frameworks. All frameworks begin as poorly articulated, narrow answers to a specific problem. The roots of Marxism lie in a series of abstruse debates between the Young Hegelians, while the origins of neoliberalism lie in an equally esoteric argument concerning the point at which the Phillips curve, measuring the trade-off between inflation and unemployment, becomes vertical, resulting in ineffective government manipulation of the economy. There are countless other ideas of equal pedigree responding to seemingly arcane matters of scholarly debate that do little more than accumulate dust on the pages of long-forgotten journals, so how can we understand how a small number of these develop into coherent organising

heuristics that solve fundamental problems of policy making? Again, the answer to this will be better elaborated in the papers that constitute this dissertation, but there are two necessary conditions that prove jointly sufficient. The first is that the leading advocates of the central ideas must be able to link their claims with a matter of great public importance. Marx was writing at a period when the iniquities of capitalism were rampant, allowing Lenin to develop his theories to form an understanding of the nature of imperialism that would result in the ability to redress the severe problems facing the peripheral peoples of Russia. Neoliberalism fed into the dominant narrative in the late 1970s concerning the rejection of Keynesian economics and shift towards a more *laissez-faire* approach that happened to find advocates in powerful countries who both implemented these ideas and provided support for the next generation. There is, it is true, a large degree of good fortune inherent in the selection of which ideas develop into frameworks, but this should not denigrate the work performed by the minds of brilliant scholars who happen to have been working on the most vexing questions of their time.

The second condition, and one implicitly outlined above, is for these ideas to find support among a fringe group that subsequently seizes power in the post-imperial period. There are different routes to power, as we shall see in the papers, but what is essential is that the ideas be well-enough developed to provide specific guidance to these groups in the struggle<sup>29</sup>. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were able to outmanoeuvre the Whites at least in part because their anti-imperialist policies bought valuable support among some key allies in the Russian periphery. Gaidar and his team of young reformers were able to convince Yeltsin of the wisdom of their shock therapy both because he found their arguments compelling and because they enjoyed significant international support from powerful backers. At the point at which the ideas have been accepted, fleshed out by followers and implemented, the central question is to

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<sup>29</sup>As Lenin wrote in late 1901, ‘The “ideologist” is worthy of the name only when he *precedes* the spontaneous movement, points out the road, and is able ahead of all others to solve all the theoretical, political, tactical, and organisational questions which the “material elements” of the movement encounter’ (Lenin, 1961, 316; emphasis in original).

what extent the ideas are self-reinforcing and generate new adherents, which is the topic of the final paper.

This last sentence relates to the final issue I address in my dissertation, relating to how we can identify weaknesses of the ideational frameworks. There are two major types of weakness I examine, intrinsic and legacy. The set of intrinsic weaknesses is broad and I shall break them down more convincingly in the first two papers. These primarily relate to problems in the formulation of policy and to blindspots. Blindspots result from the framework's inability to grasp some fundamental feature of social reality (Yeltsin and statebuilding) while problems with policy formation result from poor assumptions about the nature of material circumstances (in this case, the problem has usually been identified correctly but the framework leaves advocates in a poor position to process material information). Both are common, but the former can be existentially threatening for the leadership while the latter creates problems further on.

It is thus related to, but analytically distinct, from the second series of weaknesses revolving around the legacy of the frameworks. Legacy here encapsulates much more than simply the trajectory of policies, although this is important. It also refers to the extent to which the frameworks are self-sustaining, capable of reproducing themselves through continued support in the next generation. As we shall see, both the initial Bolshevik framework and Yeltsin's patchwork quilt experienced severe problems consolidating the successes and emending the failures after a decade, with Stalin and Putin pursuing markedly different paths. The purpose of the final paper of the dissertation is to understand why and how this happened, and why certain aspects of the original frameworks persisted while others faded completely.

Having outlined the general theory of the dissertation in some detail, we can now move to the final two parts of this opening chapter, namely justifying the selection of Russia as the central case and outlining the specifics of the three papers.

## 1.4 Case selection

Having established the theoretical position that informs this dissertation and outlined the main argument that runs through the three papers, we must now move to considerations of why the primary geographical focus should be on the territory of Russia. Given the non-material basis of the principal explanans under investigation, a case could certainly be made that the precise location is irrelevant and all that should interest us is the prominence of grand ideas. There are certainly some great works that follow such a model in terms of intellectual history. Marshall Berman's extraordinary study of modernity or Daniel Rodgers' excavations of the problems of laissez-faire capitalism are two works that largely forgo concerns over territory, spanning thousands of miles and many decades in their studies of these issues (Berman, 1988; Rodgers, 1998).

Yet what unites these kind of works is a fascination with the archaeology of a particular idea (or set of ideas that make up a particular concept), rather than a focus on the application of ideational factors to questions concerning the formulation of policy in explicit times of crisis. We do have a few individual studies of the latter phenomenon, with the work of Mark Blyth, Stephen Hanson and Keith Darden the most important recent examples (Blyth, 2002; Hanson, 2010; Darden, 2009). What we currently lack, however, is a study that seeks to compare multiple points of crisis within a single geographical area and which can therefore control for some of the immutable factors that bedevil much of the research in comparative politics. In large part this is because it is rare to find multiple outbreaks of systemic crisis in a circumscribed region, meaning that the authors of similar works either focus on a single crisis in a large region (as with Darden), or focus on a number of distinct crises across a more limited set of cases (as with Blyth and Hanson). In either case there is an inevitable leeching of explanatory power that results from the broadening of the central enquiry. By choosing to focus on a single case across two time periods, I seek to limit the problems of inference, which is particularly important given the more measured standard of proof I am suggesting we need when we consider ideational factors.



Thus, the specific benefit of this geographical focus is the presence of two imperial collapses, in 1917 and 1991, with such markedly differing leaderships assuming power in the aftermath of each. Critically, not only is there significant variation between the two cases in terms of the attitude of leading figures to ideational frameworks, but also within case. As we have seen, the performance of the Bolsheviks was strong on state-building but weak on the economy, while the post-communists present us with the reverse scenario. The legacy implications of each regime are also distinct, allowing for a fascinating tracing of the rise to power of Stalin and Putin and how they exploited the weaknesses of the first generation. This permits my dissertation to engage in three diachronic comparisons that cast an illuminating light on the questions surrounding the genesis, implementation and legacies of two of the most compelling ideational frameworks (Marxism and democratic capitalism) of the past century. While it is not entirely accurate to say that the collapse of the Russian and Soviet Empires left a clean canvas on which the successors could paint their idealised polity, the complete vacuum of central authority presented similar challenges in both cases, making the comparisons logically sensible.

The subsequent papers will elaborate in greater detail on the major differences between the two periods, as well as highlighting commonalities. But I wish to stress that we are not as concerned with material problems as with the power of ideational frameworks to assist or obstruct central policymakers in these times of great uncertainty. The focus will be on central actors, as these as the individuals who participated in debates and were responsible for the crafting and implementation of policy. I do not wish to denigrate the importance of local analysis, and there is certainly scope for subsequent research investigating the extent to which centrally-held ideas were transmitted to the local administrations<sup>30</sup>. Here I suspect the Soviets were much better than the post-communists, at least in the early years. But for now, there is so little research performed on the questions that energise me that a focus on

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<sup>30</sup>Indeed the first paper draws extensively on data collected on the North Caucasus republics and reports of local party committees for the Soviet period.

a limited number of actors and locations seems justified. If the results bear further detailed analysis, I shall hope to continue my studies on this question at a later time.

## **1.5 First paper: Ideas and state-building**

The first paper in my dissertation considers the role of ideational frameworks in helping statebuilders overcome crises of authority in the aftermath of imperial collapse. As emphasised above, perhaps the most general and dramatic consequence of the enervation of central authority that results from the disintegration of once-powerful imperial states is the unique opportunity it affords fractious peoples to launch secession or independence drives. At best, these lead to new settlements and the peaceful recognition of the autonomy of peoples who have long chafed under the yoke of empire. However, this is rarely the case and what is far more common is the looming spectre of civil war, ethnic cleansing and the kind of violence that can only emerge in the absence of a respected authority with the ability to enforce law. Understanding how ideational frameworks can thus help to avoid such an outcome, with its deeply pernicious impact on social welfare, is both important and highly valuable for political science and it is precisely this goal that my paper attempts to achieve.

It does so by focusing on a comparison of actions and policies of the Bolsheviks in the period following the dissolution of the Russian Empire in 1917 and the first postcommunist government under Boris Yeltsin with a particular geographical concentration on the territory of the North Caucasus. The North Caucasus is an ideal site to investigate the issue of the reestablishment of authority; in the years immediately following both episodes of collapse, there were instances of independence movements, violence and significant ethnic conflict that posed a serious threat to the integrity of the newly-formed states. By focusing on a single territory we can further hold constant other potentially confounding variables and isolate the importance of frameworks in guiding actions to restore an element of central legitimacy. As we shall see, there were marked differences in the capability of the two leaderships to achieve

a lasting settlement, with significant implications for future trajectories of state development.

Drawing on the theoretical framework I developed in an earlier section of this introduction, the primary argument I advance in this paper is that the years of debates between the Bolsheviks over the nationalities question prior to their seizing power afforded them with a clear perspective on how to build and develop the hold of Moscow over the North Caucasus, notwithstanding significant local resistance and severe paucity of resources. The Bolsheviks benefited particularly from the work of Otto Bauer, whose studies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and arguments concerning the importance of national and cultural autonomy would frame the works of Lenin and Stalin and provide them with an extremely important antagonist. By way of contrast, leading figures in the post-Soviet government had devoted little time or thought to resolving problems of governance within the Russian Federation, generating a profusion of confusing decrees and double standards and ultimately to two extremely violent internal conflicts in Chechnya as well as a widespread Islamist insurgency and multiple and prolonged cases of ethnic tension between the peoples of the region.

As we shall see, it is far too simple to state that the Bolsheviks enjoyed unparalleled success in achieving quiescence in the North Caucasus while the post-communist governments were utterly feckless in their attempts to reestablish authority. The Bolsheviks did face resistance; there were a series of rebellions in Chechnya in the mid-1920s and their attempts to develop a core local intelligentsia that could administer the republics had (at best) mixed success. Meanwhile the North Caucasus remains part of the Russian Federation, which is no small achievement given the chaos of the 1990s. However, I think there is a clear case to be made that the Bolsheviks were able to exploit the inadequacies and inequities of the Russian Imperial administration of the provinces and identified concrete policies that were important in both improving the lives of the indigenous population and acquiring local support. The post-communists, by way of contrast, had no clear understanding of how to manage the North Caucasus or respond to the needs of its people, electing to expend its severely circumscribed governing capital on other concerns. This absence of an understanding of both the

importance of state-building and the challenges of rebuilding fealty among populations who had suffered significantly under the previous regime was a deadly combination that merely stored problems for the future.

## 1.6 Second paper: Ideas and economic policy

The second paper focuses on the contributions that possession of a clear framework for directing economic development can play in emerging from the inevitable and sustained economic malaise of empire. By its very nature, imperial collapse is an extraordinary shock to the economy of the constituent units, as the authority underlying the common currency, trading laws and all other manner of economic and financial regulations effectively disappears. In the case of the two transitions that form the crux of this paper, there is an additional complication to add to all this: the move to an entirely different system of economic structure. From a heady feudal/proto-capitalism to communism, in the first, and then away from communism to market capitalism, in the second. Neither of these transitions were achieved with much élan, as is perhaps inevitable, but there is a surprising element that emerges from the comparison.

In essence, the roles in the second paper are reversed, as I seek to pinpoint why the Bolsheviks' economic policy immediately after taking power was a confusing amalgam of compromises whereas the Yeltsin government was committed to a firm neoliberal line. This is a particularly perplexing matter given that economic matters were central to the Marxist thought that was at the foundation of Bolshevik thinking, with everything else proceeding from that core assumption. Furthermore, the government of Boris Yeltsin has typically been characterised as pursuing a generally pragmatic line in the majority of policy areas that hewed to popular opinion, yet under the aegis of Yegor Gaidar and his team of 'New Reformers', the government was committed to voucher privatisation, macroeconomic liberalisation and a wide range of other orthodox economic policies that were electorally disastrous

but arguably critical for the stabilisation of capitalism in the country.

It may seem at first glance that this contradicts our underlying theory, since in the previous paper we had argued the exact reverse in terms of the felicity of the Bolshevik ideational framework in comparison with the chaotic approach of the immediate post-communist administration of Boris Yeltsin. However, referring back to our underlying theory, we can see that this is perhaps not as confusing as it may appear on the surface. This is because the weaknesses inherent in any given conceptual framework mean that while it may be well-suited to dealing with a given policy area, it will not be as effective in others. The exact location of the lacunae will vary from framework to framework, but we can say with a good deal of confidence that there will be at least one component of the social and political environment with which an ideologically-committed leadership is ill-equipped to grapple. The fundamental point, to reiterate, is that coherent frameworks provide the incoming authorities with the tools to overcome at least some of the difficulties of remaking a state, whereas those attempting to operate without them are likely to be overwhelmed by systemic uncertainty.

The weakness that this paper illuminates centres on the importance of flexibility. While the first paper highlighted the basic contrast between pragmatism and a more coherent ideational framework, the second will offer a more subtle examination of the problems that afflict even seemingly well-developed plans. We shall see that both the Bolsheviks and the post-Communists had frameworks, but that the former was based on an overly-rigid understanding of economic development that ignored the importance of agricultural development and the class of the peasantry. As these were central problems facing the Bolsheviks after November 1917, it entailed that they were poorly equipped to cope with the challenges of reforming an underindustrialised and largely rural economy, a problem exacerbated by the fact that many of the leading Bolsheviks had spent the years preceding the revolution in exile in Europe. By contrast, Gaidar and his team used the years preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union to develop a coherent transition plan that built on the thinking of Western economists but tailored it to the Russian experience, as was typified by the decision to

press ahead with voucher privatisation rather than insisting on completing macroeconomic stabilisation first. The ability of Gaidar and his team to adjust the recommendations of the Virginia and Chicago Schools to Russia was essential to ensuring the implementation of neoliberal reforms and preventing widespread reversion to a more moderate reform plan.

This is not to say that there is no puzzle here. It does seem strange that the economically-driven Bolsheviks were so lost when it came to crafting sustainable economic policy, moving from the extreme centralisation of War Communism to the proto-capitalist New Economic Policy before ultimate centralisation of nearly all means of production (including homesteads) under Stalin, who overcame protests from both the right and left of the Bolshevik party in the process. Meanwhile the pragmatic Boris Yeltsin, who seemed somewhat bereft of motivating ideas following the collapse of the Soviet Union, was persuaded of the wisdom of implementing a demanding series of neoliberal reforms that effectively made a return to communism and central planning impossible. To explain this divergence, I look at debates between the Bolsheviks in the years leading up to 1917 and contrast it with the development of neoliberalism from the 1950s onwards through the Chicago and Virginia schools. The basic point is that Marxism left the Bolsheviks unprepared to deal with an economy that was a world away from the advanced economy envisioned as the starting point by Karl Marx. Furthermore, there was a distinct lack of focus on practical economic solutions to the problems of industrialisation in a country that had a severe paucity of resources, which was the situation in which Russia found itself in 1917. Meanwhile, the development of neoliberalism, burnished by the relative economic success of the Chilean experiment under General Pinochet, provided the new generation of Russian economists with both detailed policy proposals and a group of international economists who had changed the international system and inaugurated the Washington Consensus, providing important international legitimacy for the reforms.

As with the first paper, it is too simple to claim that one set of leaders had all the right answers while the other floundered. The Gaidar government that enacted reforms was a

self-styled ‘kamikaze’ administration that was well aware of the high cost of macroeconomic stabilisation and it is certainly the case that international prescriptions were not well adjusted to fit the realities of the Russian environment. Meanwhile the New Economic Policy, for all its theoretical and practical shortcomings, allowed the Bolsheviks to navigate the extreme turbulence of the post-imperial environment. While we shall devote some attention to these complicating factors, the basic story is that the post-communists had a coherent plan for restructuring the economy that was broadly lacking for the Soviets. These decisions had significant ramifications for the consolidation period, which is the subject of the third paper.

## **1.7 Third paper: Ideas, consolidation and compromise**

As outlined in the opening paragraphs of the introduction, the final paper moves away from the focus on the initial years of imperial collapse to consider the processes of consolidation and compromise that characterised the Soviet Union and Russian Federation after the initial ten years, which mark the exit of the vast majority of actors involved with the initial drive to overthrow the previous regime (Joseph Stalin being the most glaring exception). The specific goal of this paper is to understand how the initial choices made in the period following imperial collapse influence subsequent trajectories, fleshing out our understanding of the influence and importance of ideational frameworks when the Knightian uncertainty has been replaced by more predictable periods where the links between decisions and outcomes return to sharp focus.

As we saw in the theoretical section, good frameworks must strike a careful balance between being so unsubstantial as to be of severely limited utility and being so dogmatic and rigid that they are incapable of adapting to the nuances of policy-making and the revelation of new and important information about material circumstances. We see in the first two papers, as well as the overarching theoretical argument, that testing and proving conjectures through rigorous and sustained debate is critical for ensuring the frameworks

are sufficiently well established at the moment of opportunity, allowing the leaderships to take the chance to refashion the policy environment in a manner guided by their insights and understandings. Where this can be combined with previous empirical experience, as in the case of neoliberalism, this is a potent combination (though it also carries the drawback of potential over-reliance on past experience in a different environment, which is another tradeoff). While there is a clear disjuncture between the initial years and subsequent periods, understanding how regimes manage to transition from a reliance on revolutionary ideology (or lack of, depending on the particular issue under investigation) to focus on the practical tasks of governing is a matter of no less importance for my project. While it is no small feat to navigate the extreme challenges in all policy areas following the dismantling of an empire, even acknowledging there will be significant unevenness across these, this is all for naught if the revolution's children eat their parents and abandon the initial precedents. Such situations usher in further periods of instability and chaos and are a direct indictment of the failure of an ideational framework to foster adherents and adapt to new realities.

In this closing paper, in place of a strict contrast between the Bolsheviks and post-communists, we see a striking similarity in terms of the relationship between the successes and failures of the opening years and the means of consolidation by the second generation. Our primary focus in this paper is on the policies enacted under Joseph Stalin and Vladimir Lenin; two men who dominated the second generation following the overthrow of the previous imperial regime. We track their policies in both state- and nation-building and the economic realm, continuing the threads of the two previous papers and focusing specifically on the implications of the failures the first generations faced in each of these areas.

The principal finding of this final paper is that the tasks left incomplete by the first generation provide a strong basis for the subsequent rulers to consolidate their claims to power and can be used to substantially remake the original settlement. Thus we see that Stalin focused primarily on the realm of economics, slowing dismantling the New Economic Policy and pushing through a radical policy of industrialisation that sought to end the dis-



inction between the rural and urban proletariat. In the process of this transformation of the countryside, Stalin moved away from the policy of *korenizatsiia* in the North Caucasus (and more generally) and began to view the non-Russian ethnicities with great suspicion, holding them responsible for the many delays and imperfections of collectivisation. Vladimir Putin utilised the other of our two core policies to consolidate his rule, focusing on recentralising state power and undoing many of the compromises Yeltsin had struck with the regions. Putin used the revivification of state power to remake economic policy, encouraging the renationalisation of key strategic industries and undoing a core plank of the Gaidar reforms.

I close the third paper by considering whether the effective replacement of frameworks is inevitable, arguing that democratic capitalism, notwithstanding some serious problems relating to statebuilding, has the internal conditions required to prolong itself indefinitely.

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## Chapter 2

# Framework for Success: A comparison of Soviet and post-Soviet state-building policies

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# Introduction

State-building in the aftermath of imperial collapse is perhaps the most demanding challenge for newly-formed governments seeking to establish their authority over the independent lands that now notionally fall under their dominion. The composite territories of empire are often beset by separatist claims and subsequent outbreaks of violence between various ethnic groups competing for the division of central spoils threaten to sever the nascent chains of control tying them to the new governors. Many of these territories objected to the original imposition of suzerainty by the imperial rulers and thus seize on the chaos of the empire's dissolution to reclaim or assert their sovereignty, necessitating the imposition of force by leaders of the new states to quell such fissiparous tendencies and prevent the total dismemberment of their country<sup>1</sup>. Compounding these existential threats is the fact that the existing bureaucratic apparatus is often not fit for purpose, having either been effectively dissolved along with the former empire or become so highly factionalised that large parts of it are unwilling to subject themselves to new political masters. This litany of problems is exacerbated in peripheral regions, where the outlying territories have a much weaker link with the centre and feelings of loyalty tend to be attenuated. Even in the cases where local leaders choose not to launch a secessionist threat, developing means of managing and pacifying them is a daunting proposition and rarely accomplished with much success. This is deeply deleterious to these societies across any given dimension of welfare measurement: frayed ties of legitimacy contribute to a general sense of lawlessness and disorder that impedes the development of public good provision, which is of particular significance in the far-flung regions of empire that tend to have suffered historical deprivation due to their distance from the metropole.

Even if the new rulers are able to address these most pressing issues, there is a significant temporal dimension to these difficulties, with a staggered series of essential tasks that further

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<sup>1</sup>Philip Roeder has written a fascinating modern history of such cases as part of his explanation for how new states are formed (Roeder, 2007).

complexify the role of the statebuilder. Evidently the primary objective is to protect the territorial integrity of the new state; the severity of this will depend on the extent of separatist sympathies and the institutional configuration of the now-defunct imperial administration, and also potential threats from neighbouring states. If the new governors can secure their borders, the second desideratum is to begin the process of reestablishing formal authority over the domain, which in post-imperial environments hinges on forging a common understanding of belonging to a new state and articulating a common purpose that binds the different peoples together. Approaches to address this multifaceted problem range from brute force to softer means linked to economic and social development that seek to redress the perceived neglect suffered under the previous regime and typically a balance must be struck between these extremes.

Given this extraordinary degree of complexity, understanding the markedly varied performance of governments in the initial years after the dissolution of an empire is a valuable and important undertaking with significant social welfare implications. The ‘age of empire’ may have passed (Hobsbawn, 1987), but controversy still rages over how to build states and design institutions in multinational countries. Indeed, one of the more contentious debates in comparative political science<sup>2</sup> concerns precisely this issue and it is one with great contemporary relevance given ongoing struggles in Afghanistan and Iraq. Therefore if we can identify factors that have helped governments to address and alleviate the systemic difficulties of state-building, we shall have helped lend much-needed clarity to a contested and divided area with immediate policy applications in an area that is a particular weakness in contemporary democratic theory.

This paper considers and contrasts two periods of post-imperial state-building<sup>3</sup> in the

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<sup>2</sup>See the debate on the wisdom of consociationalism between Arend Lijphart and Donald Horowitz and the vast literature it spawned for an insight into the details of one area of this discussion. For their takes on the debate, see their contributions to (Reynolds, 2002).

<sup>3</sup>There is an ongoing and serious debate as to whether the Soviet Union should be considered an empire, or whether it is better to conceptualise it as a state (Martin, 2001; Hirsch, 2005). For the purposes of our paper, we’ll put it in the imperial column. This has little more than rhetorical value, since we are not addressing the theory of empire in any detail here.



peripheral region of the North Caucasus<sup>4</sup> in an attempt to explain the variations in the consistency and success of policy pursued by the two regimes. The first of these considers the aftermath of the November Revolution<sup>5</sup> in Russia, covering the years from 1917-1925. This period covers the turbulent period of the Civil War and the few years of peace after it, ceasing at the point at which Stalin had largely managed to consolidate power in the Central Committee and inaugurated a sweeping change in nationalities policy following his drive for industrialisation and the launching of the Five-Year Plans. The second examines the post-Soviet period from 1991-1999, covering the entirety of Boris Yeltsin's administration of the Russian Federation but stopping before we reach Vladimir Putin and his dramatic remaking of the relationship between the localities and Moscow. The nationalities policies of Stalin and Putin will be covered in the third paper of this dissertation as part of the consideration of consolidation and the long-term impact of frameworks.

The North Caucasus posed similar challenges in both periods, with serious breakaway movements launched in the twilight of two Empires (the Russian and Soviet) and a similar paucity in material resources available to the incoming governments. However, there was a marked difference in the state- and nation-building policies chosen and the extent these were successfully implemented in the region. The Soviets managed (for the most part) to build local administrations and largely end the crushing poverty and illiteracy of these territories, which had suffered from Russian Imperial policies of wilful neglect and deliberate maltreatment since falling under the sway of the Empire in the mid-19th century<sup>6</sup>. This was

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<sup>4</sup>The North Caucasus region of Russia is in the south west of the country and lies between the Black and Caspian seas. It is constituted by seven ethnic republics: from west to east they are Adygea, Karachai-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan. The precise institutional form has varied over the past century but the territorial area has been fairly constant. See the appendix on page 46 for a map of the region with contemporary boundaries and some detail on the extent of ethnic fragmentation.

<sup>5</sup>Russia underwent a shift from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar on the 1st of February, 1918. The Julian calendar is thirteen days behind the Gregorian. Dates in this paper will follow the Gregorian calendar unless explicitly marked otherwise; thus the second revolution that occurred in 1917 will be known as the 'November Revolution' throughout the paper, even though in contemporary time it occurred in October.

<sup>6</sup>As we shall see, there was important variation between the territories of the North Caucasus in terms of the attitude of the Russian Empire to their development, with North Ossetia and the Kuban region in

Figure 2.1: Map of the ethnic republics in the North Caucasus. Source: O'Loughlin et al. (2007).



in large part thanks to the Soviet's firmly-held belief in the primacy of local organisations and the detailed thought given to how to resolve the nationalities question in the years before the November Revolution. The Bolsheviks were forced to make many compromises and deviate from their theoretical ideals, but the framework they hammered out in the years preceding 1917 enabled them to understand the costs of these concessions and prevent them from becoming too expensive and thus dragging down the entire edifice of étatisation. Yeltsin's governments were calamitous on this score: there were two serious internal conflicts in the region (the First Chechen War and the Prigorodnyi conflict); spiralling levels of unemployment and poverty; and the growth of an Islamist insurgency that continues to

particular receiving far greater leniency. Nevertheless, the general picture outlined above is an accurate one for the other major ethnicities. Even where the Russian Empire was interested in developing regions, the beneficiaries were often either major Russian industrialists or foreign investors, rather than the local populations.

represent a major threat to peace in the region. Notwithstanding some vague desire to avoid the Bolshevik path, Yeltsin and his governments evinced little desire to engage with debates over nation-building and the political aspect of governing a new country (besides a vague commitment to democracy). Instead the focus was firmly on economic reforms (the topic of the second paper in this dissertation).

On the basis of a comparison of these two cases, the primary claim advanced in this paper is that when central policymakers have an existing and informed understanding of the core elements of a given policy (in this case state- and nation-building), they are much more able to articulate and implement coherent plans than governments proceeding pragmatically on an ad-hoc basis. Having a pre-existing conception is no guarantor of success, but it does ensure that there is a coherence and consistency that enables the government to make sense of the oft-contradictory flows of information and respond adequately to the deluge of requests from all areas to a new government. All governments are faced with unforeseen difficulties in such periods, but successful frameworks provide structure to the inevitable compromises, helping the central administrators understand which decisions are consonant with their overall vision of the new state and which help to foster the nascent sense of national identity that is a core part of building legitimacy. The absence of such a framework makes it extraordinarily challenging to grasp when compromises risk undermining the state- and nation-building project or when a series of bargains with localities is liable to generate sustained long-term problems due to the emergence of beggar-thy-neighbour strategies on the provincial level.

We shall see that the series of Marxist-Leninist debates relating to the dangers of imperialism equipped the Bolsheviks with a broad framework for resolving many of the challenges of the North Caucasus. This is not to say they had a perfect record; the long-running uprisings in Chechnya and Dagestan are but one indication that not all was smooth in the early years of Bolshevik rule. In particular, the work of Otto Bauer would challenge the leading Bolsheviks to refine their thought and demonstrate precisely why his proposed solu-

tions were impracticable for the Russian case. Lenin's belief in the importance of eradicating 'Great Russian Chauvinism' along with Stalin's emphasis on the importance of protecting and fostering national cultures and developing the oppressed peoples of the former Russian Empire (which included nearly all non-ethnic Russian residents of the North Caucasus with the exception of the Cossacks) provided a platform for understanding how to respond to the immediate demands of local leaders while further integrating them into the nascent Soviet state. The policy of *korenizatsiia*, which was aimed at developing local cultures and fostering local leadership, helped offset many concerns in the localities that they had merely exchanged one form of imperialism for another by privileging local elites for administrative positions. We also see the extent to which the Bolsheviks were able and willing to alter their original policies in the face of countervailing evidence. Stalin originally advanced a policy of *raionirovanie*, which stated that territories should be organised on a purely regional basis with no account taken of ethnicity, but decided to modify this to take into account the complexity of ethnic heterogeneity in the North Caucasus. This provided a vital platform for conducting the necessary formal reorganisation of the constituent units that was one of the most problematic tsarist legacies.

The Bolshevik administration made clear errors in their governance of the North Caucasus. Their initial weakness in the region, where the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries enjoyed far higher levels of support, meant that they started with an over-reliance on local cadres who proved incapable or unwilling of adapting to the new political and economic realities, necessitating purges of the local party organisation. The forced resettlement of the Cossacks in the region stored resentment and build unnecessary opposition to the Bolshevik regime. There were serious challenges to the imposition of Soviet central authority and a number of uprisings in the North Caucasus, as well as a widespread emergence of 'greens' in the Civil War who fought against both White and Red, destroying supply lines and greatly hampering the consolidation of Bolshevik power. Despite this, in large part the early Soviets achieved major gains for the regime, establishing legitimate rule over these fractious

territories, encouraging much-needed economic development and increasing educational and cultural attainment in a region that had previously lacked all three.

Boris Yeltsin started his campaign for President of the Russian Federation (a move that would lay the foundations for his leadership of the newly-formed Russian Federation) in a manner broadly similar to the Bolsheviks, proclaiming the importance of independence for the regions and positioning himself against a totalising imperial power that had trampled on local rights and ignored important demands for social welfare. However, the trajectories of the state-building policies of Yeltsin and the Bolsheviks dramatically diverge after this initial step. Although Yeltsin's bold proclamations to the regions promised democracy and autonomy, his policies were not focused on making good on these promises. There was a confusing *mélange* of policies, compromises and backroom deals that caused tremendous problems for the nascent Russian Federation and were unresolved by the time of Vladimir Putin's ascension to power in 1999.

Yeltsin's policy for the North Caucasus largely took the form of a *laissez-faire* pragmatism. He supported the emergence of local strongmen to rule the region and took little interest in questions of development beyond authorising federal budgetary support and promulgating bizarre free trade zones with limited coherence. This may have held the Russian Federation together, but the degree of official corruption and sustained unemployment arguably did long-term damage for the relationship between the republics of the North Caucasus and the central government. The marked exception to this was the case of Chechnya, where Yeltsin launched an avoidable and largely unnecessary war that had limited prospects of success and served primarily to undermine alternatives to peaceful cooperation.

I argue that Yeltsin's failure to articulate a clear vision of state-building in a multinational federation highlights one of the major deficits of contemporary democratic theory and that much can be learned from the initial years of the Bolshevik approach to this issue. The original team assembled by Yeltsin was relatively liberal in terms of its attitude to the North Caucasus, attempting to articulate a political framework that could foster development and

improve federal-regional relations. However, this framework was largely unconvincing and was dominated by pragmatic compromises that meant they were unable to offer a convincing counterargument to the hardline team in the power ministries, demanding a firmer line on Chechnya and paying little heed to the needs for development in the region.

This paper fits with a number of recent projects that have attempted to give greater priority to the role of ideas in politics, strongly suggesting that purely materialistic explanations exclude important and oft-overlooked components of social and political realities (Parsons, 2002; Hanson, 2010; Darden, 2009). This paper's explicit goal is to encourage analysts of state-building to understand the contribution of developed frameworks and, by implication, to call on democratic theorists to provide a better vision of how to resolve significant problems in multinational states, acknowledging the implicit tension between re-establishing authority and respecting autonomy.

The paper proceeds in the following fashion. The following section provides an overview of the literature on ideas and nation- and state-building, suggesting that while ideational factors are slowly gaining prominence, they remain under-appreciated in terms of their potential impact on crafting consistent policies that help resolve centre-periphery tensions. The following section offers a justification of both the temporal comparison and the choice of the North Caucasus, arguing that both provide the potential for illuminating insights into these matters. Next I consider the dynamic of events in the relevant periods and the final section concludes with a consideration of the implications of my argument for both the state-building literature and democratic theory.

## **2.1 Ideational Factors in State and Nation-building discourse**

In the overview piece that accompanies this dissertation I have already covered the foundational theory that underlies and unites all three papers. In this section I consider the specific

literature on state- and nation-building and how this interacts with my central claims. The basic point I shall make in this section is that neither literature deals particularly well with ideational factors: state-building is almost solely focused on material aspects as driving successes and failures, while the nation-building literature has recently been swamped by a rather primitive constructivism that assumes appeals to co-ethnicity are somehow enough to trump other, more serious claims. As we shall see in the empirical section, this naked constructivism does a great disservice to the complexity of various advances that can be made by central authorities in times of crisis and is unhelpful in aiding our understanding of how to resolve basic questions of nation-building.

### **2.1.1 A Typology of Failure**

The literatures on state- and nation-building are vast and we cannot hope to cover even a fraction of it for in this paper. We shall argue in a moment that there is significant and important overlap between the two and this is the basis for much of the empirical and theoretical analysis that will follow. For the moment, we note simply that the point of departure of this paper is that analyses of state-building focus primarily on the development of core competencies of the state relating to administrative and functional capacity, whereas analyses of nation-building are more concerned with the evolution of mentalities and the formation of more-or-less coherent ideas about nation, of the successful resolution of Ernst Renan's 'daily plebiscite'.

Attempts to keep these developmental processes distinct and analyse them individually are ultimately unsatisfactory. As a classic example, Eugen Weber's remarkable book on the development of the French nation in the nineteenth century draws extensively on the process of administrative reforms in rural France, an inarguable core component of state-building, that created a common experience (Weber, 1976). Similarly, many of the classics on state-building are, as we shall see a little more below, riddled with claims about legitimacy and other factors that are hard to reduce to purely material or administrative factors. To

take a recent case, Daniel Ziblatt's compelling comparison of the unifications of Germany and Italy, which explicitly relies on the relative institutional strength of the constituent units as the driver for whether a federal or unitary system is adopted, is still riddled with ideologically-motivated claims from various local and national leaders that pertain to the rightful nature of the Italian or German 'nation' (or subparts thereof) (Ziblatt, 2006). I am not seeking to conflate the two processes entirely, for there are undoubtedly important social and political differences between building administrative capacity in a territory and engaging in the sort of historical and emotional appeals that are intrinsically tied to creating a sense of common nationhood that can overcome long-held family and tribal ties. This distinction is of particular utility for those scholars, like Charles Tilly, who study the long arc of macrohistorical development in countries and have a sufficiently broad temporal campus to allow for some degree of separation between the two (Tilly, 1990).

Nevertheless, for those who study periods of imperial collapse, maintaining even a nominal division between the two is often simply impossible. This is due to the peculiar nature of empires, which span multi-ethnic communities and vast territory and thus face unique state- and nation-building problems of their own. Their collapse, from the Roman to the British, presents local elites with the dual challenge of establishing both the basic administrative responsibilities of the new state and a sense of fealty among the inhabitants of this newly-demarcated territory (Gibbon, 1983). Moreover, these two must often be achieved simultaneously, for a failure on either dimension is liable to prove fatal for both the putative new government and its chosen people<sup>7</sup>. If it does not lead to the complete collapse of the nascent state, at the very least it generates severe and sustained problems of public order, as was the case in Yeltsin's Russia, something we shall study in more depth in a subsequent section. While Yeltsin did not necessarily 'fail' on both dimensions, we should place him at least partway in the upper-left quadrant of the table since as we shall see, his state- and

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<sup>7</sup>Stein Rokkan made a very similar point concerning the later European states and the necessity of navigating numerous challenges simultaneously, whereas the earlier European states had centuries to resolve these problems (Rokkan, 1975).



nation-building policies in the North Caucasus can hardly be described as achieving even relatively minimal goals beyond preventing outright secession. In table 2.1 we have a highly stylised account of various outcomes that result from differing combinations of success and failure across the two dimensions. In reality there is a spectrum of possible outcomes relative to success and failure, but for our purposes this parsimonious dichotomisation will serve.

Table 2.1: Simplified range of state- and nation-building outcomes.

		<b>State-building</b>	
<b>Nation-building</b>		Failure	Success
	Failure	Anarchy	Internal violence / ethnic cleansing
	Success	Criminal disorder	Success

As we see from the above table, failure on either dimension has inimical consequences for the new state (it goes without saying that failure on both dimensions is disastrous and leads to some form of warlordism or outright and prolonged civil war). Building administrative capacity without common fealty almost inevitably leads to sporadic outbursts of violence between different communities, squabbling over resources that the central authorities have been unable to frame as common heritage. At its worst, this generates ethnic cleansing, which was particularly virulent in the post-Yugoslav states (Crnobrjna, 1994). The most severe cases of ethnic cleansing occur when an ethnicity dominates the state's coercive apparatus and is able to use this to subjugate other groups; its most extreme form, genocide, is near-impossible to achieve without significant central organisation (Mann, N.d.; Snyder, 2010; Straus, 2007). Even in mono-ethnic states, the failure to craft a sense of community among the citizens of a new state through nation-building can generate frightening levels of internal violence and withdrawal from the state (Scott, 2009). The various peasant revolts that recurred in Medieval Europe are a compelling example of the sort of class-based alternative to ethnic violence that can be provoked by a failure of nation-building; the fact these were typically swiftly quashed speaks to the relative effectiveness of the state-builders' role (Fletcher, 2008); the continuing peasant protests in Western China provide a modern

analogue to this (Becker, 2012). Note that unlike the criminal disorder we shall discuss in the next paragraph, these uprisings were in response to perceived distributional injustices and failures to look after all parts of the body politic<sup>8</sup>.

The converse failure, where there is a common sense of identity but stunted growth of legal institutions, generates a form of damaging lawlessness, with debates over property rights and contracts that further undermines the legitimacy of putative central and local government actors. Unlike the internal violence that results from stunted or failed nation-building, the type of disorder that results from state-building failure is typically devoid of distributional claims. Those participating in this form of violence do not feel excluded from the state or slighted by perceived injustice, but are rather exploiting the weakness of administrators and other bureaucrats when it comes to impartial and effective implementation of a legal framework. The Mafia is perhaps the most obvious example of organised crime, but this is complicated by the entanglement and implicit approval of state officials (Hess, 1998). The street gangs in Latin America are perhaps closer to what we have in mind; these groups are not motivated by a sense of resentment towards authorities stemming from distributional differences, but are exploiting the situation on the ground that has resulted from a failure to build strong states in many of these countries (Cruz, 2007).

Evidently this table has identified ideal types and there is often blurring between the two, with complex causal pathways connecting outcomes. For example, criminal gangs often do take advantage of the violence and disorder implicit in the kind of internal violence that stems from a failure of nation-building; Nicholas Sambanis' research highlights particularly troubling examples of this phenomenon during periods of civil war (Sambanis, 2002). Pervasive criminality, meanwhile, can shred the carefully-developed fabric of a nation if left unresolved (as the current drug wars in Mexico seem to threaten to do). However, this does seem a helpful starting point as we think about the pathologies that result from failures

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<sup>8</sup>See Hill (1972) for a particularly compelling discussion of this phenomenon during the English Civil War.

to state- and nation-build effectively and consider that identifying how to do both successfully, especially if faced with the demanding situation of doing both simultaneously, has huge social-welfare implications. The very recent examples of Iraq and Afghanistan provide compelling testimony, if further were needed, of the cost of failure from a humanitarian perspective (Diamond, 2005; Jalalzai and Jefferess, 2011).

For our purposes, we can assume that many new states in the aftermath of imperial collapse are typically in some anarchic state (i.e. in the top left quadrant), facing severe challenges of state- and nation-building. States that are not in this position, enjoying either a well-functioning bureaucracy and administrative apparatus or a stable political community as their imperial legacy, are more fortunate and perhaps the urgency of responding to these difficulties is less severe (though I still think the following remarks bear on their situation). However, it is the former state, lacking such a beneficent inheritance, that is of interest to us here, since it is both the more pressing case with regard to social welfare implications and more accurately characterises the situation in Russia in 1917 and 1991. It is to this issue we now turn as we conduct a formal review of the existing literature.

### **2.1.2 Ideational Frameworks in the Literature**

The central question facing us at this juncture is how we can relate these outcomes to our overarching claims concerning the value of ideational frameworks. More specifically, do successful ideational frameworks help to move leaders of governments in post-imperial moments along the diagonal that runs from the worst-case outcome in the top left of our typology, representative of internecine anarchy, to the best case in the bottom-right? And if they do, which is the major contention of this paper, how exactly do they manage to achieve this? Again, the major contention here is that they assist in two major ways: firstly, by providing leaders with a framework to make sense of the oft-conflicting demands of state- and nation-building and thus to facilitate prioritisation of tasks. Secondly, they help central administrators make sense of the flood of information arriving from the localities and go

some way to ensuring there is consistency in both the crafting and implementation of local policy that helps stymie claims of unjust treatment from competing groups. This provides much-needed structure to the inevitable compromises that are necessary throughout the process of establishing a new state.

However, in order to answer these questions in a satisfactory manner, we need to move to consider how ideational frameworks have been used and abused in the state- and nation-building literatures to this point. Notwithstanding my scepticism concerning the false exactness that arises from the division of the two in post-imperial landscapes, for the most part there are distinct literatures addressed to each topic and it seems most sensible to proceed with a separate discussion of each, referring to the Russian case where appropriate. The next sections, which constitute the detailed look at the Russian cases, will provide the basis for justifying the answers concerning the value of ideational frameworks.

We begin with the state-building literature. Given that this is primarily focused on practical questions of how to generate organisations that approximate Max Weber’s famous dictum concerning acquiring the monopoly on the legitimate use of force over a territory, it is perhaps unsurprising that the role of ideational frameworks typically takes a backseat to research on more concrete, material matters. This is not always the case, for a few scholars do take seriously the importance of Weber’s ‘legitimate’ in the above formulation, but typically the development of the administrative and logistical underpinnings of the coercive component of the state is the focus.

This is most famously exemplified in the extraordinary works of Charles Tilly, for whom the relationship between war-making (the coercive activity *par excellence*) and state-making was inextricably linked (Tilly, 1975, 1990) throughout the vast canvas of European history under his interrogative eye. Successful state-builders were those who were able to extract greater resources from their subjects to fuel their ever-expansive aims. Thus, state-building in the Middle Ages was driven by rulers’ ever-increasing resource demands as the price of international conflict soared, “[p]reparation for war has been the great state-building activity.

The process has been going on more or less continuously for at least five hundred years” (Tilly, 1975, 74). The price for the increasingly well-developed taxation structures to fund this monarchical adventurism was the corresponding delivery of basic social services to the population, of which the most fundamental was some guarantee of law and order to replace the crumbling feudal arrangements. State-building was thus a form of grand bargain between the monarchs and the aristocracy, with the monarch extracting much-needed resources and the aristocracy slowly gaining privileges and a loosening of their role as the protectors of the countryside to allow them to pursue more profitable enterprises.

Mancur Olson’s characterisation of the state as a ‘stationary bandit’ coheres well with Tilly’s overall argument; Olson argues from a rationalist perspective that early state-builders induced that it was more profitable to remain in one spot and tax a local population, rather than living a nomadic existence that was parasitic on the ability to pillage (Olson, 2000). While it is certainly possible to graft ideational frameworks onto Tilly and Olson, these would be *post hoc* justifications by monarchs and state-builders designed to foment a form of false-consciousness among their subjects and citizens, rather than a core belief that helps these central actors navigate difficulties. The theory of divine right may have been helpful in justifying the pre-eminence of a certain individual in the kingdom by tracing hereditary back to the earliest days of Christianity, but it was almost entirely mute when it came to the rather more mundane tasks of developing kingdoms and the minutiae of administration (Figgis, 1914). Instead, when we consider the state-building enterprise of the great European administrators, such as Wolsey and Colbert, we look to their pragmatism and ingenuity, rather than their underlying understanding of governance (Murat, 1984; Ertman, 1997).

Recent studies have both extended and questioned the relevance of Tilly for modern states, but have not significantly altered the explanatory workload between ideational and material factors. Miguel Centeno, for example, noted that Latin America had not endured the centuries of war that were the birthplace of Tilly’s states, which accounts for the different developmental trajectories (Centeno, 2002). Jeffrey Herbst argues that in Africa the leaders

were often satisfied not to push for further territorial gains, as these had been reified by the international process of decolonisation, but were rather content to secure power in the capitals and exploit natural resources with no pretence of building administrative capacity (Herbst, 2000). Eva Bellin has made a similar argument about the Middle East concerning the ability of autocratic regimes to function as virtual kleptocracies, siphoning off material wealth and thus breaking the virtuous state-building cycle of mutual dependency between ruler and ruled identified by Tilly (Bellin, 2004).

Uniting these recent twists and revisions of Tilly is the focus on material explanans. For Tilly, as we have seen, war is the principal driver that triggers a series of bargains between ruler and ruled. For the recent crop of authors, war has been replaced by varying degrees of corruption, exploitation and dependence on foreign actors to explain the distorted state-building we have seen. What is notably absent from all of these accounts is an underlying philosophy of rule; leaders are focused on personal or club enrichment in a rather base fashion, with little interest in true public-good provision. Leslie Holmes, surveying the postcommunist landscape, coined the term ‘rotten states’ to describe this sort of outcome, and it seems to have wide validity in the contemporary world (Holmes, 2006). The major exception to this generalisation is the extraordinary two-volume work by Michael Mann, where ideological legitimacy is accorded a prominent place (along with three other drivers) in his historical account of state-building, though it is closely tied to the growth of Christianity and thus finds common cause with Max Weber’s account of the relationship between Calvinism and the capitalist ethic (Mann, 1986; Weber, 2011 (1905)). However, Mann’s account is sufficiently intricate as to make distinguishing the true importance of the ideological explanatory factors extremely difficult; I hope to build on his foundation whilst reducing the necessary steps we need to take to build a convincing non-material explanation for the importance of frameworks in fostering successful state-building projects.

Having considered the literature on state-building, we can move to the second dimension of our table, namely a the literature on nation-building. As should be clear from the preceding

paragraphs, this is of limited importance for the medieval and ancient state-builders, since for the most part the political community was identified with a singular figure (or at the most, a group of notables) and the remaining subjects were expected to bow to the demands of this personage. This is not to claim that the ruler had no responsibility towards the ruled, since even theories of Divine Right typically saw the subjects as childlike, needing protection from the wielder of divine power (Figgis, 1914). It is more that articulating an alternative basis for rule was near-impossible; one could appeal to a foreign power, but fomenting insurrection on the basis of injustice or an absence of belonging was, save for a very few extraordinary individuals, inconceivable. While there is a long and rich history of individuals who elect to flee the confines of the state (Scott, 2009), prior to the late-eighteenth century there were limited debates about the nature and extent of the political community, which meant that ideational factors were mostly excluded from political discourse (and thus from our analysis of these periods).

At this point we see the epochal events that would fundamentally alter the discourse over the nature of the political community and, more specifically, the nature of citizenship. The American and French Revolutions<sup>9</sup> fundamentally challenged the nature of exclusion, placing under great scrutiny the relationship between ruled and ruler(s) and how the former could actively participate in the governing of their country (Waldinger, Dawson and Woloch, 1993; Bradburn, 2009). These represented a qualitative change in how Western societies viewed the political community: this was not simply a case of the populace highlighting specific failures of governance or weaknesses of the state, but rather a challenge to the edifice on which the notion of rule had been constructed. In so doing, these revolutions ushered in the nineteenth century in more than simply a temporal sense, clearing the decks for the rise of perhaps the most prominent ideational factor in mainstream social-science discourse, namely

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<sup>9</sup>Interestingly, the leaders of the Provisional Government from February to November of 1917 saw themselves in the mode of the French revolutionaries of 1789, although as Figes makes clear, this was a fantastical claim and betrayed their failure to diagnose the dire state of the social situation in Russia (Figes, 1996, 355ff).

nationalism: the belief that the nation and the territorial state should be perfectly aligned.

Given the prominence of nationalism and its clear links with problems of nation-building, we should *ex ante* expect that this literature is far more helpful in terms of framing debates concerning the value of ideational frameworks for resolving the latter issue. However, when we begin looking in more depth at scholarly contributions, we again find limited help. The scepticism of Ernest Gellner on the contribution of ideology to nationalism<sup>10</sup> is justly famous, and for Gellner the main means for defeating the perils of rabid nationalism is economic growth and an increasing shift to egalitarianism (Gellner, 1983). In some important ways, Gellner is the analogue to Tilly in the nation-building literature, viewing developments over the *longue durée* and charting the rise of nationalism with the birth pangs of industrial society (Benedict Anderson, whose concern with nationalism is slightly different, also fits in this mode of analysis (Anderson, 1991)<sup>11</sup>).

We shall have reason to question Gellner's overly reductive account of the connection between ideas and nationalism in the empirical segment of this paper that follows, but it should be clear that these perspectives are of little help when considering the immediacy of nation-building in the aftermath of imperial collapse. The long-term limitation of material difference is an appropriate goal for most governments, but not for those struggling to keep together a newly-formed state. Perhaps this is somewhat unfair, for although nationalism and nation-building are intertwined, they are not synonymous. Indeed, both Yeltsin and the Bolsheviks attempted with limited success to create a civic identity that was independent of ethnicity and nationalism as part of their efforts to build the Soviet and post-Soviet state<sup>12</sup> and there is another literature that should prove more valuable, namely the one that deals

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<sup>10</sup>Gellner basically dismisses the role of ideas as of having much at all to contribute in his path-breaking study of nationalism, writing that '[T]hese thinkers did not really make much difference...[N]ationalist ideology suffers from pervasive false consciousness' (Gellner, 1983, 124).

<sup>11</sup>Anderson sees nationalism as the outgrowth of the emergence of capitalism, the print revolution and the development of the vernacular and argues that leaders initially sought to use nationalism 'as a means for combining naturalization with retention of dynastic power' (Anderson, 1991, 86).

<sup>12</sup>Oxana Shevel has written a fantastic piece on the strategies of nation-building in post-Soviet Russia looking at different strategies (Shevel, 2011).



with ethnic conflict.

This is one of the most prominent recent fields in political science, and I simply don't have space to do it justice (especially as this section is already overlong). The central point is that, yet again, this literature has ignored the prominence of ideational factors as a potential resolution of a problem that continues to plague multinational states. We have already noted that scholars have started to work on the relationship between state-building and ethnic conflict, noting that true genocide requires an effective state (Mann, N.d.; Straus, 2007). Fortunately, genocide is not the only manifestation of ethnic conflict, which frequently focuses on the division of resources rather than outright violence. The land shortages in the North Caucasus make this a particularly useful discussion for understanding the genesis of conflict, although the constructivist school, led by the work of Robert Bates, is far too reductionist in terms of seeing appeals to ethnicity as one more leadership strategy for limiting the distribution of scarce resources (Bates, 1983). In particular, what is missing from Bates' work is an appreciation of the context in which such appeals are likely to be effective, since they are largely predicated on some central failure to resolve ethnic problems, creating lingering resentments that can be exploited by appropriate individuals. This happened in both the Soviet and post-Soviet case<sup>13</sup>, but in the former the central authorities managed to forge compromises between groups that helped to assuage grievances (especially relating to improving the quality of life through the provision of basic institutions).

When we consider strategies for the resolution of ethnic conflict, which should be central for any would-be nation-builder, Arend Lijphart's consociationalism is arguably the most well-known. Consociationalism is a purely institutional remedy that is in principle universally applicable (Lijphart, 1977), but has come under pressure both for reifying ethnic cleavages and because it seems largely applicable to institutional engineering in developed democracies (Horowitz, 1985; Seaver, 2000). Ideas have no role in Lijphart's framework. Recent research

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<sup>13</sup>Figes demonstrates how the nationalities question was integral in the collapse of the Russian Empire (Figes, 1996), while Beissinger performs a similar analytic role for the Soviet Union (Beissinger, 2002).

has started to explore the relationship between group psychology and nationalism (Hale, 2008), but the field is largely bereft of an understanding of how ideational frameworks can be utilised to manage nationalist and ethnic conflict in times of crises. I claim in the next section that in large part this represents a deep ambivalence in contemporary liberal political thought with regard to precisely this topic and that this contrasts sharply with the Bolshevik stance in the early twentieth century.

### **2.1.3 Problems with Twentieth-Century Liberal Thought**

The general absence of ideological approaches to state- and nation-building is unfortunate and has, I think, led to neglect of a major potential explanation for the various pathologies that have marked the twentieth century. Again, merely having an abstract ideational framework is not sufficient: it must be tempered by debate and sufficiently flexible to respond to unexpected contingencies<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, material circumstances do have a direct impact on the chance of success of these frameworks, although the extraordinarily unpromising situation in which the Bolsheviks found themselves is compelling testimony to the fact that very few situations are completely hopeless. Nonetheless, as we shall see in the empirical sections the follow, when we turn our attention to the dramatic differences in problem-solving techniques and the sustainability of these solutions between the Soviets and post-Soviets, it seems hard to ignore the positive impact of ideational factors. This makes their absence from existing debates seriously problematic and suggests a major lacuna in current scholarship.

However, it is not completely fair to blame the empirical scholars, nor should it be overly surprising that it is Mann, with his theoretical predilections taking him well beyond the twentieth century, who identifies the driving importance of Christianity's ability to solve the initial dilemmas facing the imperial state-builders of the early Middle Ages (Mann, 1986, Ch. 10). This is because the twentieth century, and most certainly the post-1945 environment

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<sup>14</sup>We shall see in the final paper the result of inflexibility of these frameworks when we consider Putin and Stalin.

that is the provenance of the vast majority of social scientists, marks a dramatic loss of surety in liberal countries concerning their ability to create lasting and durable administrative apparatuses beyond their borders.

There were no such doubts during the long nineteenth century, with entrenched belief in the *mission civilisatrice* as the duty of the more advanced imperial powers to help their less developed subjects (Pitts, 2005). Indeed, John Stuart Mill was far from a lone voice in advocating a ‘benevolent despotism’ in governing the barbaric peoples of the British Empire, at least until the stage at which they could govern themselves (Sullivan, 1983, 606).

The cracks in this confidence of the supremacy of the Western powers and their ability to resolve problems in the developing world started to become more prominent during the late nineteenth century as the major countries began to experience severe difficulties in imposing their rule (as for example, with the Boer War (Parkenham, 1991)). However, the crisis can really be traced to the start of the First World War, with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the dramatic weakening of the British and French imperial apparatuses, along with the increasing isolationism of the United States. This loss of status for the major powers was combined with a crisis in liberal theory, as the realism of historical scholars such as E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau competed with the challenging markedly anti-democratic arguments of Friedrich Nietzsche and Carl Schmitt. The new ‘science’ of eugenics allowed for the dismissive attitude of the nineteenth century to non-Western races to be given greater credibility but also stripped away the sense of obligation towards developing the ‘backward’ races (Schiller, 1926).

The defeat of Nazism during the Second World War forced a re-evaluation of this general trend and the subsequent decolonisation ended the naked exploitation of the third world by the first world. However, it further severed the links of liberal obligation that had existed during the nineteenth century during the apogee of enlightened imperialism and both ideological and practical restraints on intervention flourished in the postwar period (Ferguson, 2004). The end of the Cold War may have been cited by Samuel Huntington as a central

driver of the ‘third wave’ of democratisation (Huntington, 1991), but for the most part, the democracies it produced have been somewhat feckless; weak and subject to relapses to authoritarianism (the countries of Eastern Europe have proven the major exception, but the promise of European Union membership is a major cause of their persistence (Vachudova, 2005)).

Notwithstanding the triumphalism at the end of the Cold War in liberal theory (Fukuyama, 1992), the mainstream of democratic political philosophy had embraced the doctrine of liberal neutrality, which prioritises individual rights<sup>15</sup>. This core belief dovetailed with the principle of non-intervention in international affairs since, as Michael Sandel has argued, proponents of liberal neutrality are unable to mount a defence of liberal principles due to their deep commitment to respecting all other views (Sandel, 1996). I argue that this crisis in liberal theory exerted a pull over the Yeltsin government, since there were effectively no portable models for his government to use that adequately merged propagation of democracy with nation- and state-building. This was in sharp distinction to the neoliberal economic models that the Gaidar government used to craft the program of radical economic reforms, a topic we shall address in the second paper of this dissertation. Given this absence of models, the only alternative path for successfully navigating these challenges was for Yeltsin (or someone on his team) to have developed a framework to use in the years preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union. As we shall see, this was not something that had been done.

This has generated an insular liberalism focused on protection of a core set of notionally-universal human rights, sharply limiting the potential role of the state. While this approach may be helpful and useful in the advanced democracies, with their limited problems of public order<sup>16</sup>, in new states this attitude generates two serious problems.

The first of these is that this is rather thin gruel on which to attempt to rebuild states,

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<sup>15</sup>See, for example, John Rawls’ claims concerning the absolute priority of liberty over concerns pertaining to distribution in his two principles of justice (Rawls, 1971).

<sup>16</sup>Although this is certainly debatable and there is a strong argument to be made that such an approach has generated a hollowing out of states and widespread delegitimation in the eyes of certain communities (Sandel, 1996).

especially those facing crises of legitimacy due to the problematic legacy of the preceding regime. Pledging fealty to an abstract conceptualisation of rights may avoid the problems that are inherent in new governments adopting positions on deeply politicised issues, but it also circumvents any genuine attempt to build a political community that is representative of local concerns. Will Kymlicka has attempted to overcome these difficulties in his work on citizenship, but there is a sense his answers are not completely convincing and they certainly do not lend themselves to elegant policy-making, representing an uneasy compromise between upholding liberal goals and respecting the rights of local communities (Kymlicka, 1998). The Yeltsin period provides a graphic illustration of the cost that can result from such insecure positioning in terms of the marked swings in policy from one extreme to the other, both over time and between the different republics in the North Caucasus.

However, the more serious problem is that this is a serious case of putting the cart before the horse. Encouraging governments navigating the extraordinary difficulties of post-imperial collapse to focus on developing protection of ill-defined legal and constitutional rights or criticising it for failing to uphold these rights before it has established legal authority over the relevant territory is politically and morally problematic. This was recognised relatively early in the Russian experience by Stephen Holmes (Holmes, 1997), but as we shall see, the failure to articulate a framework that recognised the imperative of some degree of tradeoff between respecting rights and building a state capable of acting in a coherent fashion.

The central point for the purposes of our paper is that liberalism failed to generate a coherent model that could help the governments of new putatively democratic states to resolve the series of interlinked problems relating to the re-establishment of central authority. Unlike the economic sphere, where the post-Soviet practitioners could invoke policies culled from the neoliberal canon, those working on nationalities issues had no such articulated framework they could utilise to impose consistency on their attempts to gain legitimacy in the North Caucasus. It is thus hardly surprising that the absence of a pre-existing model, combined with Yeltsin's loosely articulated thoughts on the matter, generated a confusing

succession of policies with little connecting them temporally or regionally beyond a reliance on local authorities to deal with the serious disorder and poverty in the regions.

## **2.2 Case Selection**

We have now completed a sufficiently thorough review of the state- and nation-building literature for our purposes and have seen how neither has really evinced much conviction with regard to the role of ideational factors in resolving these severe problems of order. I have claimed that this reflects a discomfort in contemporary democratic theory relating to the trade-off between rights and authority and that the chastening collapse of the European empires inculcated a general atmosphere of nonintervention that has extended to an unwillingness to prescribe solutions to these problems in foreign countries. The demonstration of this is centred in the Russian case, but it seems appropriate to spend a little time outlining the selection of the periods and the location I've chosen for this paper.

### **2.2.1 The Benefit of Intertemporal Comparison**

This paper seeks to make the argument concerning the importance of ideational factors in virtue of a paired temporal comparison of the same area under two different regime types: the North Caucasus region of Russia. While there are well-remarked methodological drawbacks from investigating a single geographical case in terms of the generalisability of the findings, there are distinct advantages afforded by this approach. The benefits of analysing the North Caucasus as a region given the variation among the republics and the strategies adopted by the two regimes is discussed in greater detail in the following section; the purpose of this is to argue that there are distinct advantages to holding constant the general area and comparing two distinct periods.

The first, and perhaps most important, of these is that we can hold constant many potentially confounding variables. Notwithstanding the Soviet project to fundamentally

restructure the region, in keeping with the general trend of Soviet transformation, the culture and geography of the North Caucasus remained largely constant over the seventy years of communist rule. While levels of education and wealth rose under the Soviets, at the fall of the Soviet Union the republics remained among the poorest and least developed in the Russian Federation and the grievances against the Soviets after a legacy of population deportation and consistent purges was arguably comparable to those raised against the Russian Empire. This is not to say that there are not important differences between the republics and we should certainly be wary of generalising too broadly, but there are clear methodological advantages that can be leveraged from the analysis of a single region across two time periods.

Given this relative constancy of material factors, if we find variation in the strategies of the governments across time in the absence of significant changes in conditions on the ground, we have a reasonable basis for the argument that this variation can only be explained by a difference in the perspective of the central authorities. This change could arise from alterations in the pattern of available information, a different understanding of what constitutes success or an alternative approach to policy-making. I wish to argue explicitly that it is the latter since the other two did not vary in a fashion that would suffice to explain the divergences in strategy between the Bolsheviks and the post-Soviets.

This does not mean that material factors were irrelevant. For example, Chechnya's declaration of sovereignty in 1991 undoubtedly put Yeltsin and his first government in a supremely uncomfortable position following the assumption of power and the demise of the Soviet Union. Similarly, the problematic legacy of Cossack settlements in the North Caucasus created a genuine problem for the Bolsheviks that was largely without comparison in the post-Soviet setting. Both governments were forced to make significant compromises to deal with a region that was largely beyond their control for the first few years and the nature of these agreements with local actors was strongly influenced by conditions on the ground.

But the argument in the paper makes a claim that goes beyond understanding specific compromises and, in that sense, is an important shift from works that (as we shall see) claim

the Bolsheviks nationalities policy was a product of on-the-hoof decision making without structure. It is only in comparison with the Yeltsin period that we can gain an understanding of the extent to which the Soviets had an articulated ideational framework that placed significant limitations on the kinds of compromises they were willing to make and that facilitated the articulation of a coherent policy in the North Caucasus. Without this temporal dimension, we lack the perspective to advance such a judgement.

Equally as important is that at this stage of the research programme, discussions over the impact and worth of ideational factors remain at a disappointingly low level of salience and theoretical development. The review of the literature in both state- and nation-building that I conducted in the previous section shows that while there is a mild movement towards taking non-material factors more seriously as potential explanans, this remains rare and even recent studies are still in thrall to a reductive materialism. Thus, at this stage we are very much in the realm of developing and articulating theory and there is a strong argument in favour of a greater reliance on in-depth qualitative studies of limited areas to identify and specify these theoretical connections (Mahoney, 2007; Brady and Collier, 2004).

However, arguments over ideational factors demand temporal perspective if they are not to be disappointingly flat. In this paper, for example, I track the develop of nationalities debates in the early twentieth century among the chief Marxist thinkers, arguing that this strongly influenced Lenin and Stalin's decisions following the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. In the following paper, I track a similar trajectory for neoliberalism and the architects of shock therapy in post-Soviet Russia. But in both cases, it is only through a comparison with a case with a similar set of circumstances but entirely different ideational resources that we see the effectiveness of ideational frameworks. This is not, I freely admit, a perfect counterfactual (Fearon, 1991), but it allows us to get much closer to this than would be the case were to attempt to evaluate the impact of ideational factors in a single point in time.

As I included much of the relevant argument concerning temporal comparison in the introductory chapter that connects the three papers, it seems sensible at this stage to move



to a fuller exploration of the North Caucasus before proceeding with the formal empirical sections.

## 2.2.2 The North Caucasus

The final part of justifying the set-up of the paper is to consider the geographical focus of this paper. The North Caucasus, as mentioned, is a peripheral region in the Russian Federation, lying at the southwest expanse of the state and bordering the Georgia and Azerbaijan to the south. In its current incarnation (for our purposes<sup>17</sup>) the region is constituted by seven ethnic republics<sup>18</sup> and one *krai*. Running west to east, these are Krasnodar krai, Adigeya, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan (see the map on page 46 for more details) and as of 2012, these territories had a population of around 12.5 million people. As we shall see, levels of development in the region remain extremely low and there are continuing problems of disorder that have been largely unresolved since the tsarist authorities first completed their conquering of the region in 1864.

The North Caucasus is an understudied area in political science (and in general, regardless of field), although there are signs that this may now be changing (Lyall, 2008, 2009; Zhukov, 2010). In large part this is due to the complexity of the region: in one republic alone, Dagestan, 81 languages are spoken and the complexity of the ethnic groupings in this region is equally forbidding<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, the governing structures have changed regularly throughout the region's history, necessitating a willingness to engage in historical research

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<sup>17</sup>Medvedev, in creating the North Caucasus *Federal'nyi Okrug* in January, 2010, excluded Krasnodar and Adigeya and included Stavropol krai, but we shall include Krasnodar and Adigeya and exclude Stavropol because the former historically had more in common with the other ethnic communities.

<sup>18</sup>The form of federalism in Russia is asymmetric, allowing for various levels of autonomy of the constituent units. Republic is the designation with the highest status, although the distinctiveness of the republics have been reduced under Putin (see the third paper for more on this).

<sup>19</sup>There is some debate as to how exactly to divide Dagestan's ethnicities; the Soviets recognised 14, but this certainly understates the matter and in this part of the country, ethnicity and language are by no means synonymous (Ware and Kisriev, 2010, 39).

to understand the complexities of the current situation. Of the works that have been published since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the vast majority concern the wars between Russia and Chechnya: these have been used as the basis for books and articles concerning the development and growth of Islam in the region (Hahn, 2007; Hughes, 2007), the effectiveness of counterinsurgency strategy (Lyall, 2008), and the foreign policy of Russia in the aftermath of the attacks on September 11th 2001 (Lieven, 2002), among others. This is understandable, as the Chechen war is the only conflict in which the Russian state has consistently deployed military force against its own civilians, is the site of numerous atrocities (see Politkovskaya (2003, 2007)), and is riddled with fascinating and contradictory personalities that contributed significantly to the failure to find a peaceful settlement (Hughes, 2007) (for an excellent journalistic account involving most of the major Chechen players, see Smith (2006). For the Russian side, see Colton (2008, Ch. 11)).

Nevertheless, this focus on a highly specific aspect of relations between the federal and local administrations in the North Caucasus blinds us to the extraordinary range of outcomes that we see when we extend our focus beyond the confines of Chechnya. This region should be of particular interest to scholars of state- and nation-building; the tsarist empire was more or less content to leave the region underdeveloped<sup>20</sup>, ignoring problems of crushing poverty, overpopulation and widespread illiteracy among the indigenous populations (Mastyugina and Perepelkin, 1996), with the exception of the Ossetians, who were the sole significant indigenous group in the North Caucasus to convert to the Orthodox Church and were thus endowed with special protection by the tsarist authorities (Hagendoorn, Linssen and Tumanov, 2001). The Soviets made it a central part of their policies to attempt to develop the region and enjoyed moderate success (from a very low base), while the post-Soviet governments have largely struggled to articulate a compelling vision for how to transform the

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<sup>20</sup>The discovery of oil around Grozny at the end of the nineteenth century caused a slight revision to this general plan, but development did not extend beyond the city limits (Marshall, 2010). This largely explains why Grozny was given independent status as a city in the early years of Bolshevik rule, only later being incorporated into Chechnya.

problems that continue to bedevil the societies located there.

Using the North Caucasus as the basis for an analysis of state- and nation-building may seem a rather ambitious undertaking given the wide differences between the various republics/territories. For example, Krasnodar is and always has been (for the purposes of this paper) dominated by Cossacks and ethnic Russians and relatively well developed, while the indigenous people of Ingushetia profess Islam and have had virtually no local industries to speak of. However, the fact that there are seven (non-independent) cases allows for a much wider appreciation of the state-building strategies of the two regimes and provides significant scope for contemplating the existence or absence of an overarching framework for expanding and fortifying central power in such localities. While we cannot hope to cover all seven republics in a relatively short paper, understanding how and why policy was varied by the two regimes across the republics provides us with important and valuable information concerning the degree of underlying coherence (or otherwise) of said policies is thus illustrative of the core concepts at the heart of this paper.

The crucial fact that underlies the comparison is that both the Bolsheviks and the post-Soviets faced serious problems of order in the North Caucasus, with multiple liberation movements and uprisings against central authority. Furthermore, in both cases, the governments sought to leverage the support of the regions against the previous regime; the Bolsheviks adopted a policy of encouraging far greater autonomy (stopping short of full independence once they realised they would struggle to control essential material resources), while Yeltsin's administration similarly used the promise of greater local freedoms to leverage support among the republics against the rapidly declining Soviet government.

Perhaps the most critical problem in the North Caucasus is the extremely circumscribed amount of usable territory. The Caucasus mountains shape the region, making large parts of the land effectively unusable for modern intensive agriculture. These mountains also divide many of the territories, facilitating the persistence of ethnic identity that is the hallmark of the region (see the map in the appendix for a graphic illustration of this). This problem was

exacerbated by the tsarist authorities following the final capture of the region in 1864 as they sought to settle ethnic Russians and Cossacks in order to help pacify and dilute the influence of the indigenous peoples, who were largely hostile to imperial rule (Gammer, 1994; Seely, 2001). What little economic development the region saw in the period prior to the November Revolution was largely driven by ethnic Russians, meaning that the indigenous populations remained marginalised, poor and illiterate. Berbekov, for example, has estimated that prior to the November Revolution, around 2% of Kabards were literate and less than 1% of Balkars, with just 37 schools and around 3,500 students in the entire oblast of Kabardino-Balkaria (Бербеков, 1958, 10).

To take but one example, Dagestan is an extremely complex multi-ethnic amalgamation of territory that constitutes the eastern-most point of the North Caucasus. It fell to the tsarist empire in 1813 as a result of the Gulistan Treaty with the Persian Empire; prior to this the absence of centralisation significantly retarded economic development (Османов, 1984; Ware and Kisriev, 2010)<sup>21</sup>. While tsarist administration helped foster economic development, the gains from this were extremely narrowly distributed and Osmanov writes that 70% of the population were in the mountainous areas with around .25 hectares per capita for crop-growing and other essential subsistence agriculture (Османов, 1984). The extent to which Dagestan remained an agricultural society with extremely limited development is evidenced by the fact that in 1913 fully 89% of the population were involved in agriculture and on the eve of the November revolution, there were a mere 134 industries in Dagestan employing just under 5,000 individuals, although the vast majority of these were ethnic Russians (Османов, 1984).

This area was thus an ideal testing group for Lenin's developing theses about nationality policy and experiments in building of central administrative capacity through local cadres. As we shall see below, the performance was uneven, but compared to the decades of imperial neglect under the tsarist regime, the dramatic advances in literacy and cultural development

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<sup>21</sup>See Ware and Kisriev (2010) for more detail on pre-tsarist Dagestan.

were quite extraordinary. Yeltsin, by way of contrast, had only vague beliefs in how to instantiate democracy and how this related to relations with the localities of the nascent Russian Federation and, as we shall see, this was the source of tremendous difficulty in the North Caucasus.

Having justified the methodological approach and geographical location of my analysis in this paper, we can now move to a focus on the evidence in support of the major claims. I wish to emphasise at this point that I am not making the claim that the Bolsheviks had a completely consistent plan for implementing state- and nation-building, nor that material factors (such as the development of local cadres) were completely irrelevant.

## **2.3 The North Caucasus and the Early Soviets (1917-1927)**

We can now turn to the empirical meat of the paper, which consists in arguing that the ideology of the Bolsheviks furnished them with a much more coherent approach to state-building in the North Caucasus than was the case with the post-communist administration of Boris Yeltsin. I wish to emphasise that this does not entail an absence of retrenchments and uncertainty on the part of the Bolsheviks; as we shall see below, there were many missteps and compromises that were an integral part of their attempts to build a functional state in the North Caucasus, as well as ensure the loyalty of the indigenous peoples to the new Soviet state. The point is rather that the ideational frameworks that emerged from early twentieth century debates in Marxism relating to questions about the appropriate relationship between the socialist state and different nationalities strongly influenced both Lenin and Stalin and provided structure that helped delimit the forms of acceptable compromise. This was of particular value in the North Caucasus due to the plethora of demands on the central state from the many ethnic groups, ranging from demands for education development, to greater autonomy, to deportation of the Cossacks who had been settled in certain places as part of

the imperial expansion.

The first half of this section will present an overview of the Marxist debates over nationality and how this influenced and shaped Lenin and Stalin's thinking on the matter. We shall see that Lenin originally had little to say about the nationalities question in the Soviet Union, viewing this as largely subservient to the importance of developing the working classes. However, internal conflicts between the Armenian Social-Democrats and the Jewish Bund in Russia forced him to begin to confront this question and it became increasingly important for him from 1913 onwards (in large part due to the work of Otto Bauer and Lenin's discomfort with his arguments). 1913 was, not coincidentally, the year in which Joseph Stalin was tasked to write his extremely important work *On the Nationalities Question*; this differed in important respects from Lenin's preferred conceptions but would come to be broadly accepted as the Bolshevik doctrine and would strongly influence decisions in the North Caucasus until Stalin's sharp divergence in the late 1920s (a topic for the final paper).

We shall not have a great deal to say about the debates over state-building among the Bolsheviks in this section. This is primarily because neither Lenin nor Stalin had too much to say about the state in the period prior to 1917 beyond that contained in the debates over nationality. They were largely content to leave the administration to local cadres and Soviets (at least until it became clear that following this policy was exacerbating local conflicts in the North Caucasus). It is wholly in keeping with the argument of this paper that the limited conceptions of how to manage a state would cause problems in the administration of the North Caucasus although, as we shall see, the flexibility that resulted from the years of arguments over nationalities policy helped greatly in ameliorating this situation.

The second half will focus on events in the North Caucasus and how these challenged and refined the Bolshevik arguments about nationality. We shall see that Lenin and Stalin were forced to compromise on the notion of national self-determination and that the themes of economic development and national culture came to be increasingly interlinked. How-

ever, the early debates and the insistence on developing local cadres enabled the Bolsheviks to overcome widespread initial resistance following the ending of the Civil War and begin building the Soviet state in the region.

### 2.3.1 Marxist debates over nationality

We begin with an overview of the debates over nationality that were of crucial importance in helping the Bolsheviks navigate these periods of extreme uncertainty and that helped them defeat the supporters of tsarism in the Civil War. As Hélène d'Encausse notes in her excellent treatment of the early debates over nationalities in Russia, the origins of this question can be traced back at least to the Decembrists and questions over federalism (d'Encausse, 1991). However, for the purposes of this paper we shall start our analysis with the interactions between Vladimir Lenin and leading European Marxists in the early twentieth century, since it is a core component of our thesis that Lenin's understanding of the resolution of the nation-building question in the early Soviet Union was informed and refined by this process<sup>22</sup>.

This is certainly not the view of all historians who have studied this period. Terry Martin, who authored the magisterial *The Affirmative Action Empire*, argues that in 1917 the Bolsheviks 'did not yet possess a coherent nationalities policy'; they underestimated the strength of nationalism in the Russian Empire and their initial commitment to self-determination was a pragmatic gamble to win support against the Whites' (Martin, 2001, 2). There is abundant evidence that Martin is at least partially correct and it is certainly the case that the Bolsheviks did make a number of compromises to ensure their rule would persist through the Civil War and in the years beyond<sup>23</sup>.

Francine Hirsch, who is Terry Martin's most vocal opponent<sup>24</sup>, adopts a more moderate

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<sup>22</sup>This is undeniably true, even if Lenin's attitude to his interlocutors was dismissive and mean-spirited, as Figes reports (Figes, 1996, 391).

<sup>23</sup>Richard Pipes is also highly sceptical of the notion that the Bolsheviks had any coherent approach to governing in 1917 (Pipes, 1990).

<sup>24</sup>She argues that the shift in policy in the early 1930s was the logical development of the move towards the socialist future, rather than a dramatic break with the previous model as Martin claims (Hirsch, 2005).

position concerning the role and value of ideology for the early Bolsheviks. She argues that it is impossible to understand the development of nationality policy without taking on board the central role of Marxism (Hirsch, 2005, 6), but agrees with Martin that the decision of the Soviets to abandon the full-throated call for national self-determination was rooted in pragmatism since the Bolsheviks were concerned that ‘it would not be possible for Soviet Russia to survive without the cotton of Turkestan and the oil of the Caucasus’ (Hirsch, 2005, 5).

Hirsch and Martin’s points are well taken and as two of the authorities in Soviet nationalities policy, they command respect. However, I want to argue here that Martin unjustly ignores the years of debates that had preceded the revolution and that, contrary to his perspective, the nature of compromises and concessions was determined in large part by the developed nationality policy articulated by Lenin and Stalin in the preceding period. The reality is that the Bolsheviks did have a consistent nationality policy that emerged in 1918 and through which we can understand the seemingly contradictory mess of compromises and concessions; the sole purpose of these was to ‘preserve for the present and the future of the power of the working class by subordinating or joining it to the rights of nations’ (d’Encausse, 1991, 98). While I agree with Hirsch that the Bolsheviks were forced to compromise on certain topics due to the importance of material circumstances, these compromises were not actually central to their ideational framework. As we shall see, Lenin was always leery of full national self-determination and, for Stalin, only nations with particular characteristics should be granted self-determination. For the most part, the ethnicities in the North Caucasus simply did not meet these but they were still deserving of protection of specific cultural components (such as the development and protection of indigenous languages).

In order to demonstrate this point, we must conduct a survey of the thinking of European Marxists and how this influenced Lenin and Stalin. While the focus will primarily be on the latter two thinkers (and especially Lenin), we will make reference to others where appropri-



ate<sup>25</sup>. The evidence we shall use is taken from the collected writings of Lenin and Stalin up to 1917, since we are primarily interested in how the ideational framework developed prior to the November Revolution; after that the focus of this paper shifts to how this related to the policies enacted in the region for the first few years of Bolshevik power.

At the turn of the century, the nationalities question was largely ignored in Marxist and socialist thought (at least until Otto Bauer's tremendously influential work; more on this below). However, due to the activities of the Armenian Dashnaks and the Jewish Bund in the Russian socialist debates, Lenin and Stalin were forced to confront this issue much earlier than most. Both the Dashnaks and the leaders of the Bund sought to prioritise national issues alongside class-based debates in order to redress the oppression facing the Armenians and Jews<sup>26</sup> respectively; both explicitly mentioned the possibility of national self-determination as a means for resolving these problems. This solution was anathema to Lenin, who was concerned that not only would this distract the socialists from pressing for the proletarian revolution, but that it may lead to alliances between the bourgeoisie and proletariat along national lines, making agitation much more difficult. Stalin, as we shall see, was born and raised in the Caucasus and was thus somewhat more sympathetic to calls for national self-determination, though he still hewed to Marxist orthodoxy in the early years of the twentieth century.

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<sup>25</sup>There is not space here to consider the role of other Bolshevik thinkers, though a full list would include Plekhanov, Bukharin and Zinoviev in the first order. For a fuller survey, d'Encausse is an excellent source (d'Encausse, 1991).

<sup>26</sup>There was no little substance behind the claims that the Jews faced unusual amounts of repression. They were mostly forced to reside in the Pale of Settlement, with severe restrictions on their ability to purchase land, and were unable to attain the rank of full Professor in the Imperial academy and there were many restrictions on their access to political power. In the interpellations (basically interrogations held by the First Duma) held in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution Pyotr Stolypin, the Minister of Internal Affairs, was forced to respond to charges that the government had been actively promoting anti-Jewish pogroms over the preceding few months (Ascher, 2001). Many in Russia blamed the 1905 Revolution on Jewish revolutionaries; the same charge would be levelled against the leaders of the November 1917 revolution. Moreover, the Duma under Nicholas II was powerless to prevent the funding of extremist organisations and newspapers by the chief of the secret police, P.G. Kurlov, that explicitly encouraged pogroms, undermining any hopes the Jewish groups may have harboured the 1905 Revolution would lead to a material change in their circumstances (Figes, 1996). We should also not forget the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, one of the most famous forgeries made by the tsarist police in 1902.

Thus Lenin in 1903, writing in response to the Manifesto of the Armenian Social-Democrats, decries the principle of national self-determination, arguing that support for national autonomy ‘may become necessary...only in isolated and exceptional cases’ (Lenin, 1961b, 329); the focus is rather on ‘the self-determination of the *proletariat* in each nationality rather than with self-determination of peoples or nations’ (ibid)<sup>27</sup>. Similarly, Stalin, influenced by his reading of Georgian history, argued in October 1904 that different classes have different views of the national question and that the Georgian National Democrats were making nationalist appeals with the sole aim of winning over the proletariat in opposition to the Social Democrats (of whom Stalin was himself a member) (Stalin, 1952). Stalin further argues that the national question of the proletariat must be subsumed to class interests (similar to Lenin’s position at this juncture) and is strongly critical of the proposals of the Armenian Social Democrats (and also of the Jewish Bund) (Stalin, 1952, 38-39).

At this stage, the Russian Social Democrats were confronting the same problem that all Marxists in multi-national countries faced at this time concerning the tensions between the desire to support oppressed groups without creating obstructions to the overall goal of unifying the international proletariat. Lenin and the Social Democrats in 1903 committed themselves to supporting the right of nations to self-determination, without supporting any concrete demand of a nation for self-determination<sup>28</sup> (Lenin, 1961*a*, 455). The point Lenin is trying to make, rather unconvincingly it must be said, is that the Social Democrats will not support unconditional demands for self-determination, but will do so only when it benefits the proletariat as a whole (Stalin argued exactly this position in 1904; it corresponded to Clause 9 of the Social Democrats programme (Stalin, 1952)). Lenin attempted to clarify this

<sup>27</sup>This is largely consonant with the position of the Second International, although as Hélène d'Encausse argues, Lenin's position would start to diverge rapidly and resemble in some aspects that advanced by Otto Bauer concerning the importance of nationality (d'Encausse, 1991, 12). Lenin would then break from this position in 1913 (see below).

<sup>28</sup>This was not dissimilar in some respects to Yeltsin's position in the early 1990s. As we shall see below, Yeltsin strongly encouraged the various regions of the Russian Federation to embrace sovereignty without evincing any understanding of what this entailed for the nascent Russian state, causing serious problems and arguably contributing to the war in Chechnya in 1994.

in May 1905 in a preface written to accompany the Yiddish version of the Report on the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., arguing that, notwithstanding the ‘economic and political oppression’ suffered especially by the non-Russian nationalities, the only real solution was ‘for the closest possible unity among the proletarians of the different nationalities’ to overthrow the tsarist yoke (Lenin, 1962, 495)<sup>29</sup>.

By 1912, matters had rather reached a head, with severe divisions opening between the central committee of the Social Democrats and the non-Russian groups, whom Lenin accused in 1913 of privileging nationalism over socialism and forging ahead with a damaging isolationism (Lenin, 1963*c*, 465). It was also during this period that Lenin and Stalin began to engage seriously with the work of Otto Bauer, the Austrian Social Democrat who produced perhaps the most compelling treatment of the relationship between social democracy and the nationalities question, originally published in 1907 (Bauer, 2000)<sup>30</sup>. Bauer’s work is monumental and as we are chiefly interested in how he influenced the Bolsheviks, we have limited space to discuss it here.

There are two critical contributions to the debate made by Bauer. The first is that his conceptualisation of the nation relies on national character, the ‘complex of physical and intellectual characteristics that distinguishes one nation from another’ (Bauer, 2000, 20). He sees this as wholly separate from class identity, but it is not an immutable component. Both of these characteristics make it rather difficult to analyse using the standard tools of Marxism, but it is the second characteristic that encouraged Lenin and Stalin to grapple more seriously with the nationalities question because it illustrated the problematic nature of their earlier statements on self-determination. This is because Bauer’s socialist solution to the

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<sup>29</sup>This was in the guise of an explicit attack on the Bund, which had been affiliated with the Russian Social Democrats but broke with the party in 1903, claiming to be the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat. The Bund would reunite with the Social Democrats in September 1906, but relations between the two would continue to be fractious.

<sup>30</sup>Perhaps it is unsurprising that Lenin and Stalin were not particularly interested in grappling with the nationalities question as this juncture given that they were still analysing the aftermath of the 1905 Russian Revolution and diagnosing the failures of the Russian Social Democrats to adequately capitalise on this moment.

problem of multinational states (his example was drawn from his experience in Austria, but the analogues with Russia were obvious to both Lenin and Stalin and Russia was referenced explicitly by Bauer as a problem for internationalists (Bauer, 2000, 419)) was to argue against a form of vapid internationalism that he thought would be of little value to nationally-situated proletarians. Rather, he argued that Social Democrats should be in favour of granting nations territorial autonomy<sup>31</sup>. In his draft platform for the Social Democrats in Austria, he calls for the country to be transformed into ‘a democratic federative state of nationalities’ (Bauer, 2000, 425) since it is only through the means of guaranteeing democratic rights to the proletarians of the various nations that a thicker, more justifiable version of cosmopolitanism can be achieved.

By May 1913 both Lenin and Stalin were ready to address what they saw as the serious deficiencies in Bauer’s work, although their responses would differ in interesting and important ways. Lenin attacked what he regarded as Bauer’s bourgeois nationalism, continuing to see any appeal to nationalism as a tool used by the bourgeoisie to divert workers from the real struggle. The end goal for Lenin and Bauer was similar in that both aimed for perfect equality between nations: ‘No privileges for any nation or any one language! Not even the slightest degree of oppression or the slightest injustice in respect of a national minority...’ (Lenin, 1963*f*, 92). Tactically, however, there remained a chasm separating them as Lenin continued to insist that while nations should have the political right to secede, cultural autonomy is a misguided goal, since it ‘*joins* the proletarians and bourgeoisie of *one* nation and *keeps* the proletarians of different nations *apart* (Lenin, 1963*b*, 116; emphasis in original)<sup>32</sup>. Lenin clarified these abstract musings with respect to Russia in his 1913 *Theses on the National Question*, stating that there were a number of nations within Russia’s borders that had been ‘unbelievably oppressed’ by tsarism and were thus deserving of political self-determination

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<sup>31</sup>He also emphasised the importance of education in the native language of indigenous peoples for development, which was something the Bolsheviks would also adopt as they sought to remake the North Caucasus (Bauer, 2000, 272).

<sup>32</sup>This is a direct attack on Otto Bauer’s claims.

(Lenin, 1963*e*, 243), though this would be subject to appraisal on a case-by-case basis depending on the needs of the proletariat. He also states that ‘[i]t is impermissible, from the standpoint of the Social Democrats, to issue the slogan of *national* culture’ (Lenin, 1963*e*, 246). By September of 1913 we see the emergence of practical policy measures, including (of particular interest to us) the requirement that a democratic government must ‘provide the people with schools where instruction is given in all the native languages’ (Lenin, 1963*d*, 427); though this is no way should be confused with an educational programme that fosters bourgeois cultural nationalism, meaning that schools must not be segregated on grounds of nationality (Lenin, 1963*a*, 504). In a further response to his critics (of whom he certainly saw Bauer as being one of the more important), Lenin in late 1913 refers to the classic Marxists base-superstructure claim, noting that in all nations there are bourgeois and proletariat cultures, but that the ‘general “national culture” *is* the culture of the landlords, the clergy and the bourgeoisie’ (Lenin, 1964*d*, 24). Interestingly, at this stage Lenin explicitly rules out development of national curricula as being wholly representative of bourgeois cultural nationalism (Lenin, 1964*d*, 37). If this uncompromising line had been adopted by the Bolsheviks in the North Caucasus, it would have met with tremendous resistance and may have even imperilled the attempt to establish Bolshevik power in the region.

But it was not to be, and this is again where we see the benefits of debate in terms of tempering problematic positions and forcing the leading Bolsheviks to compromise in the service of greater practicality without losing the essence of their central claims. Not coincidentally, 1913 is also the year where we see a clear development in Stalin’s thinking on this question, with huge implications for the subsequent Bolshevik nationalities policy. In his brief letter *On the Road to Nationalism*, he exhibits obeisance to the Leninist line that defence of the right to self-determination does not entail universal support for this ambition, since the role of the Party is to ‘influence the will of a nationality towards a decision most in accordance with the interests of the proletariat’ (Stalin, 1953*d*, 296).

However, in the same year Lenin commissioned Stalin to address the nationalities question

from a Marxist perspective. This work, *Marxism and the National Question*, came to be Stalin's most important contribution to the Bolshevik debates and marked a significant divergence from his previous line and Leninist orthodoxy. The distinction between the two is immediately obvious as Stalin develops his definition of the nation, citing four necessary and sufficient commonalities:

A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.

(Stalin, 1953*c*, 307).

We should place special emphasis on the claim of a 'common culture', drawing, as it does, on the work of Bauer and clearly contradicting Lenin's own take on the matter, since this undermines Lenin's claim that the culture of a nation is merely a bourgeois manifestation<sup>33</sup>. Stalin seems to recognise that he cannot side too openly with Bauer and argues that the latter's own conception of a nation is insufficiently specific since Bauer downplays the significance of language and territory and focuses on national character, which Stalin characterises as something more akin to the 'mystical' and completely unhelpful with regard to developing policy<sup>34</sup> (Stalin, 1953*c*, 309-312). However, the fact that Stalin is willing to accept the existence of national culture is of great significance and has tremendous bearing on the ultimate policies pursued in the North Caucasus. At this stage, Stalin was still cautious with regard to national autonomy and his strong preference was for regional autonomy, since he believed the latter would minimise the attraction of nationalisms that could fragment the proletariat (Stalin, 1953*c*, 375). He did recognise the importance of certain components in minimising nationalist opposition and proposed that all nationalities be granted the right to

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<sup>33</sup>Stalin was initially distrusted by many of the leading Bolsheviks on the basis that he was simply a Georgian nationalist and ignored the orthodox Marxist line that nationality was completely irrelevant and possibly harmful to the Bolshevik cause (Service, 2005).

<sup>34</sup>This would have important ramifications for the treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union, since Jews clearly do not fit well with Stalin's criteria and he explicitly dismisses them as a nation (Stalin, 1953*c*, 312-313). While this is of great importance for general studies of Soviet nationality policy, it has limited bearing on the North Caucasus since the Jewish communities there tend to be small and generally rather isolated.

use their own language, their own schools and their own faith: ‘equal rights of all nations in all forms (language, schools, etc.) is an essential element in the solution of the national question’ (Stalin, 1953*c*, 376).

By May of 1914, Stalin’s arguments seemed to have at least partially convinced Lenin, as the latter drafted a bill aimed at defending the rights of national minorities that called for a redrawing of local boundaries based on national composition, the rise of democratic local government (with limits to be established by a central parliament) (Lenin, 1964*b*, 281) and proportional distribution of cultural and educational spending<sup>35</sup> according to the presence of national minorities in a given area; the bill was not ultimately introduced to the Duma, but it proves instructive as to how Lenin was developing his ideas concerning practical means to defend local minorities and the influence of Stalin (and, obliquely, Bauer) on his developing conception of how to manage the nationalities question. This is also the juncture at which we see Lenin’s analysis of the dangers of imperialism formally connecting with this issue<sup>36</sup>. Thus, during the early months of the First World War, Lenin clarified his thinking on the nature and dangers of Great Russian nationalism and argued that ‘the defeat of Russia [is] the lesser evil in all conditions’ as this would place further strain on tsarism, whereas victory would embolden the forces of reaction (Lenin, 1964*c*, 163). Furthermore, he criticises both Kautsky and Trotsky for supporting their respective governments, labelling this ‘opportunism’ and arguing that this threatens the international linkages of the proletariat (Lenin, 1964*d*). Lenin viewed the First World War not as a war of liberation or historical importance, but rather as ‘an imperialist war to enhance the oppression of nations ’ (Lenin, 1964*g*, 411).

Hirsch has argued that there was little development in the pieces Stalin wrote from 1913 to 1917, suggesting that the Bolshevik leadership was content with the prewar nationality policy they had advanced (Hirsch, 2005, 56). However, this seems to overstate the case

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<sup>35</sup>Triggered by a dramatic rise in educational spending under Stolypin, the number of schools in the empire rose from 92,295 to 123,754 (an increase of 34%) (Ascher, 2001, 234), although the ethnic minorities in the Caucasus were typically not privy to this increase in resources.

<sup>36</sup>Although *Imperialism* would not be published until 1916, the outbreak of the First World War encouraged Lenin to delve deeper into the nature of the division of the world’s resources.

somewhat. In 1916 Lenin again chose to address problems with Bauer's theory and cultural autonomy and also clarified the role of proletariat in oppressor nations, arguing that it must 'struggle against the enforced retention of oppressed nations within the bounds of the given state, which means they must fight for the right to self-determination' (Lenin, 1964j, 147). He followed through on this in his *Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party* in May 1917, calling for 'the proclamation and immediate realisation of complete freedom of secession from Russia for all the nations and peoples who were oppressed by tsarism' (Lenin, 1964l, 73), although he believed that such a stance would attract these nations to remain in Russia as a result of its obvious democratic qualities. In concrete terms, in a speech on the national question at the 7th All-Russia Conference, Lenin called for the granting of autonomy to Ukraine and Finland<sup>37</sup> (although the Bolsheviks were later to backtrack on this demand, realising that they needed the resources in both countries) (Lenin, 1964h).

Ultimately it was Stalin who would enjoy the freedom to implement his beliefs following his appointment as Commissar of Nationalities; Lenin largely removed himself from these debates in the aftermath of 1917. At this juncture there remained some residual uncertainty concerning the appropriate support for self-determination: Stalin voices pro forma support but states that 'This...does not mean that Social-Democracy will support every demand of a nation' (Stalin, 1953c, 321), since Social Democrats' main obligation is to ensuring the success of the proletarian revolution. They will thus support self-determination insofar as this makes it impossible for bourgeois nationalists to use nationalist rhetoric to gain support for attacks on other nations.

However, this awkward position was largely jettisoned in the face of events. In November 1917, Lenin and Stalin (as Commissar for Nationalities Affairs) issued a proclamation in the

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<sup>37</sup>Pyotr Stolypin became personally involved in the Finnish question during his stint as Prime Minister, railing against the use of Swedish in official documents and exercising a firm hand over the local leadership in order to prevent any expression of sovereignty; he argued in 1905 that in 1908 Finland was not on par with the Caucasus as a region but was rather a part of the Empire like any other. This attitude was perhaps unsurprising given that large numbers of Finns had participated extensively in the 1905 Revolution (Ascher, 2001). It had the rather predictable effect of exacerbating the already strained relations between the Finns and the Imperial authorities.



name of the Russian Republic that clarified the Soviet platform with regard to nationalities:

1. Equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia.
2. The right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination, up to secession and formation of an independent state.
3. Abolition of all and any national and national-religious privileges and restrictions.
4. Free development of national minorities and ethnic groups inhabiting Russia.

(Lenin and Stalin, 15 November, 1917 (1975, 192-193).

This was largely the platform that would provide the basis for Bolshevik actions in the North Caucasus. As we shall see, it was closely linked with Stalin's belief in the importance of education in local languages and developing local intelligentsia, both of which were integral in winning support in the region<sup>38</sup>. Stalin would face serious opposition to his proposal from leading Bolsheviks in a major conference of the party in April 1917, but would win approval for his policy thanks largely to Lenin's intervention (Service, 2005, 130). Before proceeding to a consideration of events in the North Caucasus, we should say a little about Lenin's thoughts on the state (Stalin added very little to this), although these developed much later than his work on the national question and are more superficial.

Thus we see in May 1917, Lenin in writing the *Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party* argues that the first step in constructing the socialist state must be the direct arming of the people themselves in order to destroy the previous means of oppression<sup>39</sup> (i.e. the military and police) and, particularly, government by Soviets of Workers and Peasant Deputies<sup>40</sup> (Lenin, 1964*l*). These would oversee the nationalisation of land. Interestingly, while Lenin

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<sup>38</sup>In April 1918, Stalin would draw attention to a primary challenge concerning the growth of Soviet power among the 'culturally backward elements' and argue that extending the authority of the Bolsheviks to these regions was 'impossible unless these regions are autonomous, that is, have their own schools...social, political and cultural institutions and unless the labouring masses of these regions are fully guaranteed the right to use their own language in all spheres of social and political activity' (Stalin, 1953*e*, 77).

<sup>39</sup>This explains the strong support the Bolsheviks offered to the Red Guards, which were the local militias organised in the February revolution and that persisted until November (Figs, 1996, 370).

<sup>40</sup>Lenin was concerned about the presence of wealthy, capitalist peasants in these organisations and did not trust them, calling for shadow organisations to be formed in order to keep them in line and protect the poorer peasants (Lenin, 1964*f*).

stated that he preferred centralisation in order to resolve the problem of famine, he recognised at the April 1917 Petrograd Bolshevik Conference that ‘there are times when things can best be done locally; we should allow a maximum of initiative in the local areas’ (Lenin, 1964*e*, 150) and this was further confirmed when in July of 1917 he published the famous article in *Pravda* demanding ‘[a]ll power to the Soviets’ (Lenin, 1964*a*, 164).

Lenin’s most famous work on the state is contained in his monograph, *The State and Revolution* (Lenin, 1964*k*). This is an open attack on what Lenin perceives as Kautsky’s misinterpretation of Marxist theory concerning the state; he draws heavily on Engels to argue that the state is the defender of ruling-class interests and therefore the appropriate step for its opponents is to strip it of its oppressive powers through populist militias (see his claims in the previous paragraph). Lenin criticises both those who assume the bourgeois state will merely ‘wither away’ without the need for a violent revolution and those who argue that the proletariat can utilise the bourgeois state for its own ends - these attacks are specifically targeted at Kautsky and the Mensheviks, whom Lenin sees as petty-bourgeois opportunists (Lenin, 1964*k*, 412). It is worth emphasising that although Lenin calls for the ‘smashing of the state’ on numerous occasions in this piece, what he specifically means is the smashing of the state’s coercive and official machinery, since the apparatus of the state is vitally important for securing the revolution (something that would be of central importance in helping to achieve victory in the Civil War):

‘We are not utopians, we do not dream of dispensing *at once* with all administration, with all subordination[...]. To organise the *whole* economy on the lines of the postal service so that technicians, foremen and accountants, as well as *all* officials, shall receive salaries no higher than a “workmen’s wage”, all under the control and leadership of the armed proletariat - that is our immediate aim.

Lenin (1964*k*, 425-427)

Having considered the Bolshevik debates over nationality policy in depth and in rather more superficial detail Lenin’s work on the state, we can now move to a consideration of the North Caucasus in the period from 1917 to 1927 and a consideration of how the Bolsheviks

sought to overcome the twin legacies of civil war and extreme underdevelopment in the region.

### **2.3.2 The North Caucasus: Warzone to Testing Field**

The period of early Bolshevik rule in the North Caucasus was marked by intense activity and episodes of extreme violence. The region was one of the principal battle zones of the Civil War as the Cossacks and ethnic Russians in Krasnodar provided considerable support for the anti-Bolshevik armies. Throughout this period, the indigenous peoples of the eastern Caucasus worked to remove many of the Cossack population; a policy that was at least tacitly encouraged by the Bolsheviks. After the Civil War the Bolsheviks were able to begin applying their nationalities policy, which was intimately connected to state-building in the region. We shall see that there were multiple compromises and revisions to the general policy that emerged in this period, but unlike the Yeltsin administrations, the framework that had been developed in the pre-revolutionary period provided some element of structure to these and prevented the situation from spiralling out of control.

There is such a wealth of material on the North Caucasus in this period (albeit in highly fragmented form) that I cannot hope to cover all of the events and details in this paper. Indeed, the variations between the seven territories in the initial ten years would be enough to fill a monograph rather than a relatively brief paper. However, as the introduction to this paper noted (and as the section providing an overview of the region demonstrated) one aspect that united all seven territorial groups, with the exception of Krasnodar (and possibly North Ossetia), was the extraordinary levels of underdevelopment. Literacy rates were often in the single digits and agriculture was the dominant industry for many residents of the North Caucasus, notwithstanding the extreme land shortages that made this a problematic basis for economic survival. This presented both a great challenge but also a tremendous opportunity for the Soviets in terms of transforming the region and gaining legitimacy among the indigenous population. The second major challenge facing the Bolsheviks was administrative: the

Russian Empire, along with neglect of the economic status of the North Caucasus, had also failed to develop a feasible set of political organisations for the confusing ethnic divisions in the territory and overcoming these was of critical importance for achieving any further social or economic progress. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks generally lacked a presence in the Caucasus and had been unable to establish strong organisations in the region, something recognised as early as 1909 by the man on the ground, Joseph Stalin<sup>41</sup>.

It is undeniably true that the Bolsheviks did not envisage the collapse of the Provisional Government to occur as rapidly as it did in 1917, nor did they expect to be in control of a country on its knees following years of war and persistent famine. The state- and nation-building challenges were daunting, yet the years of debates and policy promises had furnished the Bolsheviks with a framework that would allow them to navigate these turbulent times and implement their broad vision of nation- and state-building. This is not to say that they were dogmatic in their pursuit of ideological goals; such an approach would have doomed their cause, for they enjoyed limited support beyond the city confines of Petrograd and as we shall see, were far behind the Social Revolutionaries in the North Caucasus<sup>42</sup>. Nevertheless, the years of debates placed them in a position to be able to manage the deluge of information and negotiate the extreme difficulties of the early years of power<sup>43</sup>. They made many mistakes in the process, some extraordinarily clumsy and some the result of lacking control over local actors in the early years, but the underlying commitment to a specific vision and understanding of how to construct a socialist state ensured that none of

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<sup>41</sup>Stalin wrote of the collapse of membership and highlighted that ‘St Petersburg does not know what is going on in the Caucasus’ (Stalin, 1953*g*, 151), although he claimed that ideological penetration of Bolshevik thought remained high among the peoples of the region.

<sup>42</sup>This was largely because the North Caucasus was predominantly rural, with extraordinarily low levels of urbanisation (even by 1920, only 4% of the inhabitants of the Kabard okrug lived in the okrug’s only city, Nalchik, with the rest classed as rural (Бербеков, 1957, 62)) and the Bolsheviks were largely unknown outside of the major urban centres. The Socialist Revolutionaries had been far more successful in demonstrating a long-term interest in resolving the peasant question and had accordingly high levels of popularity among the rural poor (Fitzpatrick, 1994).

<sup>43</sup>The confusion of their policies in Finland, the Baltics and Ukraine over what constituted self-determination and the appropriate nature of secession speaks to initial uncertainty and sincere hopes of a revolution throughout Europe, but in part this reflects the genuinely puzzling nature of the situation (d’Encausse, 1991, 75-85).

these proved terminal.

The build up the November Revolution was a period of extreme confusion for the Russian Empire as a whole due to the increasing power of local soviets and the emergence of the system of *dvoevlastiia*<sup>44</sup>. This was magnified in the North Caucasus as the complex interrelations between the Cossacks and indigenous peoples were untethered by the withering of central authority, leading to outbreaks of violence and claims for independence of the localities (Marshall, 2010, 60-65). This dire situation would be further complicated by the ferocity of fighting in the Civil War, where the Caucasus would play a central role in the battles between the Bolsheviks and defenders of the old order. Furthermore, the debates over federalism were also occupying much of the attention of Stalin and the Commissariat for the Affairs of Nationalities; Stalin gave an interview to *Pravda* in April 1918 when he characterised the federalism of the Bolsheviks as ‘a union of definite historically evolved territories, each distinguished by a specific manner of life and national composition’ (Stalin, 1953*f*, 70), reflecting closely Stalin’s definition of a nation. We shall see below that this ultimately resulted in the policy of *raionirovanie*, but there were serious problems regarding the Tatar-Bashkir republic (the North Caucasus was not originally included in the list of territories explicitly designated as part of the federation at this early stage).

The details of the struggle over the Caucasus in the years of the Civil War would fill an entire paper and are extremely well summarised in Marshall (2010, Chapter 3). The presence of Cossacks in the Caucasus provided the White forces with a stronghold that was absent in other parts of Russia<sup>45</sup> and the North Caucasus would witness some of the most intense and prolonged battles of the Russian Civil War; the ferocity of the fighting made

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<sup>44</sup>Although as Figes has argued, the near-complete collapse of central authority and burgeoning sense of independence in the provinces entailed this could be more accurately described as *mnogovlastie* (Figes, 1996, 359).

<sup>45</sup>Although relations between the Whites and the Cossacks were extremely complex and never moved beyond a marriage of convenience against the Bolsheviks (Figes, 1996, 556ff). Indeed, the Cossacks themselves were at times hopelessly divided, with older Cossacks allying with the Whites and members of the younger generation often preferring the Bolsheviks (see *And Quietly Flows the Don* for a literary description of this impossible situation).

it impossible for the Bolsheviks to impose order on the region and thoroughly independent *ispolkoms*<sup>46</sup> mushroomed (Marshall, 2010, 58), with the Bolshevik Party enjoying extremely marginal support during the initial period of the Civil War<sup>47</sup>. Among the many parties that were on the left of the political spectrum, it was the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, both strongly committed to democratic socialism, who enjoyed the greatest popularity in the Caucasus, with the former particularly strong (Kenez, 1977). Evidence for this is seen in the results of the 1917 elections to the Constituent Assembly of November 1917, notwithstanding the fact that much of the North Caucasus was in such a chaotic situation that elections were not held<sup>48</sup>:

Table 2.2: Results of the November 1917 election to the Constitutional Assembly (selected districts)

	Party Votes <sup>a</sup>					
		SR	Bols.	Mens.	CD (Cadets)	Total
<b>District</b>	Don	478,901	205,497	6,327	43,345	1,406,620
	Taurida <sup>b</sup>	300,150	15,642	11,118	29,904	524,750
	Stavropol	291,395	17,430	10,898	327,916	647,639
	Kuban	<i>No election</i>				
	Terek-Dagestan	<i>No election</i>				
	Caspian	<i>No returns</i>				

<sup>a</sup> Source is Radkey (1950, 88-89).

<sup>b</sup> Crimea and Southern Ukraine.

The territories of the Eastern Caucasus (particularly Dagestan and Chechnya-Ingushetia), given the mountainous terrain that made it near-impossible for regular supplies or fresh troops to be sent from Moscow, swung between the Bolsheviks and the White forces throughout the Civil War, with large numbers of partisan fighters (the ‘greens’) obstructing both

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<sup>46</sup>Executive committees with responsibility for running local regions.

<sup>47</sup>The first formal Bolshevik Party organisation in Kabarda was established in the first half of 1918 and by the end of that year could count only 50 people among its members . The timing was deeply inauspicious, for Denikin’s troops would seize Nalchik in January of 1919 and control Kabarda and Balkaria until the 24th of March, 1920 (Бербеков, 1957, 39-40).

<sup>48</sup>Lenin would allow the Constituent Assembly to meet in January 1918, but as soon as it became clear that the Social Revolutionaries, who had won a clear victory, would not support the Bolsheviks on a number of key policies, he ordered the Assembly disbanded.

sides in the hopes of gaining independence for their territories<sup>49</sup>. The Terek region, which ran east from Kabardino-Balkaria, declared itself as an independent Mountaineer Republic (Союз горцев) in May 1917 under the leadership of local leaders of industry (including the oil magnate from Grozny Cherm oev) and actively opposed the extension of Bolshevik power and fought against the incursion of the socialists, receiving recognition from Turkey and support from Britain (Бербеков, 1957). By December 1, 1917, a Terek-Dagestani government had been declared in direct opposition to the Bolsheviks under the leadership of the Cossack ataman Karaylov and Prince Kaplanov but this was quickly crushed and the leaders executed, with the Bolsheviks establishing their own government in Terek oblast (Бербеков, 1957)<sup>50</sup>. Meanwhile in the west, the Cossacks (and Germans, seeking to undermine Bolshevik power) helped General Denikin and the Whites capture Ekaterinodar in August 1918, which had formerly been established as the capital of the North Caucasus Soviet Republic in April of that year (Marshall, 2010, 57,108). At this stage, the prospects for the Bolsheviks were not good, but the intransigence of the Whites in insisting on a continuation of tsarist policies, combined with the Bolshevik rhetorical commitment to greater autonomy were essential elements in changing the dynamic of the war.

Perhaps most important was Denikin's refusal to countenance any form of federalism and his intransigence on land reform<sup>51</sup> ensured that popular support for his forces would remain marginal, facilitating the ultimate routing of White forces throughout the Caucasus

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<sup>49</sup>Figes argues that these green troops, who were largely peasant insurrectionists, were responsible for the advance of the Whites in the South due to the destruction of Red supply lines and the consistent ambushing of troops (Figes, 1996).

<sup>50</sup>For more on the details in this region, see Кобахидзе (1971), which details the extreme situation of the Bolsheviks in 1919 and through the early parts of 1920.

<sup>51</sup>He would change his mind on this, but too late to change the course of the Civil War (Kenez, 1977, 233); prior to this Denikin had followed a policy of returning land to the aristocracy after the reconquering of land, which alienated the peasantry even further (Figes, 1996, 572). In the oblasts of Kabarda and Balkaria, which were under White control for just over a year, he ordered the closing of all schools that had been opened by the Soviets and returned the oblasts to the previous forms of governance and imposed high levels of taxation on the working class (Бербеков, 1957). These policies were generally representative of White behaviour in towns and oblasts they seized and ensured that among the peasantry and poor there would be extremely limited support for the continuation of counter-revolutionary government.

in March 1920 through a combination of Bolshevik might and local insurgencies<sup>52</sup> (Marshall, 2010, 131). The relationship between these insurgencies and the Bolsheviks was, to say the least, rather fraught. The most obvious example of this is in Dagestan, where the actions of the local revkom, which had been hastily convened in April 1920, the overzealous Cheka and uproarious returning Red Army soldiers aggravated the local population to such an extent that a dangerous armed rebellion broke out in September of that year, led in large part by the remnants of the insurgency in Dagestan<sup>53</sup>. It was finally quashed in May 1921.

Ultimately, Lenin's understanding of the central role of organisation, and the priority he placed on building a strong party apparatus, would prove decisive in ensuring the Bolshevik victory throughout the country (Kenez, 1977)<sup>54</sup>. Stalin's promises as Commissar of Nationalities to grant greater autonomy to the regions of the North Caucasus (in particular with regard to respecting Sharia law given the importance of Islam to many societies in the North Caucasus<sup>55</sup> ), were also integral to ensuring that Red Army recruitment remained strong in the region and the Bolsheviks had sufficient breathing space to implement their policies, dampening the attraction of the radical insurgents for the general population<sup>56</sup>. In 1921, reflecting on the victory in the Civil War, Stalin would argue that 'the Russian workers could not have defeated Kolchak and Denikin...had they not eliminated national enmity and

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<sup>52</sup>Although, as we shall see in the next paper, War Communism and the requisitioning of foodstuffs from a peasantry on the verge of starvation harmed the Bolshevik standing amongst the peasantry, especially in the South (Kenez, 1977).

<sup>53</sup>Marshall argues that if the local representatives of Bolshevik power had been more disciplined and if the promises of aid to offset the worst effects of War Communism had arrived earlier, there was 'a critical window of opportunity to maximize and build upon immediate local goodwill' that was ultimately irretrievably squandered (Marshall, 2010, 133).

<sup>54</sup>Kenez argues that 'In Russia, it was only the Bolsheviks who were predisposed by their intellectual and political traditions to act on the basis of this understanding' (Kenez, 1977, 2), where the 'understanding' relates to the need for organisation and discipline.

<sup>55</sup>In November 1920, addressing the Congress of the People's of Dagestan, Stalin stated that 'The Soviet Government considers that the Sharia, as common law, is as fully authorized as that of any other of the peoples inhabiting Russia. If the Daghestan [sic] people desire to preserve their laws and customs, they should be preserved' (Stalin, 1953*a*, 409).

<sup>56</sup>Although these promises, with the exception of Dagestan, did not last. In Kabardino-Balkaria, for example, sharia courts were liquidated by 1922 and by 1923 all official madrasses in the oblast had been shuttered (Бербеков, 1958, 43).



national oppression at home' (Stalin, 1953*b*, 21). While there is understandably some self-aggrandisement and justification for the continuation of the policy in such words, it cannot be denied that they contain much that is true.

Nonetheless, as Marshall notes, following the end of the Civil War, the North Caucasus was effectively a 'tabula rasa for the ruling Bolshevik party' (Marshall, 2010, 149); the *mélange* of previous governing policies in the region had nothing in common besides their lack of success, meaning the Bolsheviks had virtually nothing practical on which they could draw besides their pre-existing framework for nation- and state-building. This was a distinctly unpromising situation for the new Bolshevik government, which found itself severely materially stretched and with extremely limited control over the region over which the government claimed authority.

The extreme ethnic fractionalisation of the North Caucasus meant that the policy of geographical division of territory along roughly ethnic lines (*raionirovanie*), which was established in late 1920 at the Eighth Party Congress, would remake the region in dramatic fashion<sup>57</sup>. Smith argues that the early decisions concerning the form of territorial organisation of the Soviet Union were 'largely the product of on-the-hoof decisions and haphazard developments' (Smith, 1999, 30), and he makes a compelling case that the early interactions between the Central Commissariat and the Narkomnats (the People's Commissariat for Nationalities) were troubled, principally because the individual leaders of the ethnic groups in the latter saw themselves as advocates for their groups, rather than implementers of central policy (Smith, 1999). These local representatives to Narkomnats also helped push policy away from a pure focus on regionalisation to something that was more sympathetic to ethnic divisions<sup>58</sup>. Similarly, Hirsch argues that the Soviet central administrators had no coherent

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<sup>57</sup>Martin notes that this was originally designed to be an aid to economic reorganisation of the new state but was rapidly grafted onto the nationalities policy as a reflection of Stalinist principles, resulting in the creation of national soviets (Martin, 2001). We have seen in the debates over nationalities policy that Stalin in 1913 called for the regional, rather than ethnic, division of the country to encourage local autonomy. It became obvious in the North Caucasus that the complexity of ethnic divisions made such a plan unworkable, so it was amended to include ethnic elements.

<sup>58</sup>Narkomnats created a special department for the highlanders of the Caucasus, with subdepartments

plan for regionalisation and that this ‘was a process of trial and error’, emerging from a compromise between a principle of nationality (supported by Narkomnats) and those advocating the economic paradigm, who dismissed the importance of national rights in building the new Bolshevik state (Hirsch, 2005, 64-65).

As suggested above, North Ossetia represents an exceptional case due to the fact that it was the sole ethnic republic in the North Caucasus where the indigenous population professed Russian Orthodoxy. This entailed that it was not subject to the same policies of neglect by the tsarist administration; as of 1899 there were 72 schools functioning in the republic and teachers’ conferences (*s’ezdi uchitelei*) were organised in the republic in 1888, 1901 and 1904 (Bezhanova, 1991, 8). The Ossetian script was alphabetised by the Russian scholar Andrei Shergen in 1844 and there were dedicated publishers for the Ossetian language in pre-Revolutionary Russia, something that was not present in the other North Caucasian republics and that provided the Ossetians with a local intelligentsia (in the Western sense) long before the neighbouring republics (Чердижиев, 1971). While it suffered from the same shortage of land common to all North Caucasus ethnic republics, industry was relatively well developed with Belgian investment driving hydroelectric plants, ore and silver mines and chemical factories; by 1915 there were 411 going industrial concerns, although the average number of employees was just over five (Чердижиев, 1971, 11). Due in part to the large Cossack presence and relative wealth of the oblast, Bolshevik power would not be consolidated until March 1920.

Smith is surely right to argue that the Bolshevik ideal would have been for monoethnic states (Smith, 1999, 66), but the tremendous population movements in the North Caucasus in the preceding fifty years prior to the revolution, combined with the chaos of the Civil War period, made this goal utopian and as we have seen, it was soon dropped. In the initial period after the official ending of the Civil War, the local Caucasus Bolsheviks, with the

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devoted especially to the Lezgins (Dagestan), Cherkessko-Kabardins (Kabards and Adigey) and the Osetins (Бербеков, 1957).

full support of Sergei Ozhonikidze who was loosely in charge of the region, began deporting Cossack stanitsas<sup>59</sup> in wholesale fashion from the Terek region; this was finally stopped in early 1921, but resulted in a dramatic restructuring of the local ethnic landscape. For example, among the Ingush, only a fraction over 2% of the population remained in the mountains as a large proportion moved to occupy land formerly seized by the Cossacks during their original settlement (Marshall, 2010, 178). Baranov describes how in January 1921 the Central Executive Committee decreed that all Cossacks should be removed from the Mountain ASSR (that had been established in November 1920 - see below), but that this policy was rescinded in April (Baranov, 2005, 255)<sup>60</sup>.

The deportation of Cossacks was, at this early state, a reflection of the inability of the Bolsheviks to exert any degree of control over the North Caucasus<sup>61</sup>. Their reliance on the local *ispolkoms* and charismatic leaders to oversee the internal governance of the North Caucasus during the years of the Civil War reflected an acknowledgement of the fact that there was simply insufficient state capacity to implement desired changes. There was also, as Francine Hirsch has made clear, a severe knowledge deficit among the central committee members of the Bolsheviks, who relied on a combination of ethnographers from Moscow and local experts to survey the terrain and provide much-needed information concerning the state of relations and development in regions distant from Petersburg (Hirsch, 2005). This intensified the clashes between the central committee and Narkomnats in the early years of Bolshevik rule as the impression was that there was significant leeway for local actors to

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<sup>59</sup>A stanitsa is a Cossack settlement without an acceptable translation in English due to the extremely high variance in both population and services that can fall under this general heading. ‘Settlement’, if we could drop the anachronistic nature of the term, would be an acceptable start. Stanitsas remain prominent in contemporary Russia in all areas with Cossack populations and are particularly important in the Kuban region of Krasnodar.

<sup>60</sup>He also notes that Cossack demands for an administrative territory for Russians carved out of Chechnya and Sunzhen were initially firmly rejected, despite OGPU reports that the Chechens and Ingush were continuing to seize land and terrorise the Cossacks (Baranov, 2005). Similarly, the Russian population included in the Adigeyan-Cherkess AO expressed severe discontent with the local administrators and demanded to be moved into the Kuban-Chernomorskaya oblast; again, these demands fell on deaf ears.

<sup>61</sup>In 1921 Stalin was firmly supportive of the attempts to drive out ‘Great Russian kulaks’ from the North Caucasus (Stalin, 1953b, 27), which presumably included many Cossacks. Whether this simply reflected a recognition of the absence of central control over the process is an open question.

influence central policy and, as we have seen, many of the representatives on Narkomnats saw their primary role as serving as advocates for their ethnicity, rather than resolving central problems of governance.

It should be surprising to no one, therefore, that Soviet policy in the North Caucasus proceeded along a path of awkward compromises and, on occasion, appalling violence to achieve their policy goals. There were, for example, frequent purges of the local ispolkoms (executive committees) and occasional reversion to revkoms (revolutionary committees), which were supposed to be phased out as elections were held in the localities (Marshall, 2010, 153). Both of these steps are further confirmation (if any were needed) of the extent to which the Bolsheviks struggled to find reliable executors of the central policy platforms; many of those removed were openly diverting resources or positions to relatives or members of the same clan and evinced no more than a nominal commitment to Bolshevik ideals (we shall see below that the leaders of the Mountain ASSR provide a good example of such behaviour).

It seems inarguable, therefore, that Donogo does not exaggerate when he talks of the ‘basic miscalculations’ (*grybix proshetov*) in nationalities policy that generated widespread resistance to Soviet rule in the North Caucasus (particularly in Chechnya and Dagestan) (Donogo, 2005, 270). There is an undeniable similarity with the early years of the Yeltsin government at this stage; the sense is most certainly of a government struggling with reliance on untrustworthy local figures and debating the extent to which local autonomy can cohere with central authority. The classic example of this is the dithering over Bashkiria in 1919; initially granted extremely wide-ranging autonomy (including control of a Bashkir army and near-total command of the domestic system), the Bolsheviks recanted on this in 1920 and clawed back most of the powers that had been ceded the previous year (d’Encausse, 1991, 93). Yeltsin, as we shall see, was both unable and seemingly uninterested in reasserting the primacy of the central authorities of the Russian Federation over the local republics, granting high levels of autonomy in the initial stages of the Russian Federation but uninterested in clawing much of this back for federal authorities as the state stabilised.

Bashkiria was far from exceptional in terms of debates over organisational structure. As we have seen, the tsarist legacy in the North Caucasus was a confusing mess and there were multiple problems facing the new rulers of the country with regard to the formal territorial organisation of this region in the early years of Bolshevik power. Although both Stalin and Lenin were sceptical of the value of federalism, both realised that this was the only feasible means of governing the country and further elaborated the asymmetrical system that had begun under the tsars (Smith, 1999). In the North Caucasus, the initial step following the Bolshevik victory was to replace the unwieldy Terek oblast with a Mountain Republic (ASSR) in November 1920, uniting the eastern North Caucasus peoples (with the exception of Dagestan - see below) into a single administrative unit but supposedly granting greater levels of autonomy. The extent to which Bolshevik power was rather underwhelming in these areas is demonstrated by the fact that the first meeting of the Kabard revkom took place on the 15th of June, 1920<sup>62</sup> (Бербеков, 1958, 41).

However, this was soon splintered by requests to leave the ASSR. The first of these came from the Kabards, whose ispolkom protested the lack of ‘any defined economic link’ with the other component parts (Бербеков, 1958, 47), which was approved on the 21st of September, 1921 leading to the formation of the Kabard autonomous oblast (AO). However, within a few months further changes were in prospect; VTsIK decreed that in view of the close historical and cultural links between the Kabards and the Balkars the latter should also leave the Mountain ASSR and join the former, leading to the creation of the Kabardino-Balkaria AO (Бербеков, 1958, 51). first from the Kabard/Balkar and then the Karachai/Cherkess leaders, who demanded and were granted separate AOs on the basis of a more advanced level of economic development (in September of that year and January 1922, respectively (Smith, 1999)<sup>63</sup>). The Kabard settlement represented the first North Caucasus territory

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<sup>62</sup>The region had previously been dominated by Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, with the Bolsheviks struggling to make initial inroads and forced to send external emissaries in order to provoke support for the Party (Бербеков, 1957).

<sup>63</sup>This casts serious doubt on the claims of various historians concerning the identity of local demands to keep the Mountain Republic in existence, as suggested in Ware and Kisriev (2010, 27).

to be organised along the lines of a single, dominant ethnic group and provoked years of territorial debates with the Mountain Republic, as both the Ossetians and the Karachai had disputes concerning the bordering land. These would be unresolved at the time of the Mountain Republic's dissolution in July 1924<sup>64</sup>, as by that point the leadership of the Mountain Republic had completely lost the confidence of the overseeing authority of the Caucasus region and, decisively, the Central Executive Committee in Moscow (Marshall, 2010). This led to the formation of the Ingushetia and North Ossetia AOs, with Vladikavkaz as a shared capital between the two until Ingushetia's absorption by Chechnya in 1933-34 (Marshall, 2010). The North Caucasus region was placed under the overall authority of the North Caucasus krai administration.

Prior to the forced disintegration of the Mountain Republic, the Chechens were granted autonomy in November 1922 (Groznyi remained a separate administrative region), although Smith notes evidence that this was primarily to 'empower the native population and restore order to a region plagued by banditry' (Smith, 1999, 53). However, Marshall has convincingly demonstrated that the administration of the Mountain Republic was dominated by Ossetians, with no Chechen or Ingush representative sitting on the local *sovnarkom* (Marshall, 2010, 163). Unlike under the Russian Empire, this did not represent a Bolshevik preference for the Ossetians over the Chechens and Ingush, but rather was representative of the extremely weak state of the Bolshevik Party in these latter regions, forcing the new revkom to admit non-Communist Chechens to six of the thirteen seats on the local revkom (Marshall, 2010, 164), one of the most impressive cases of overnight *korenizatsiia*. However, doubts over the head of the local revkom, T. El'darkhanov, grew over the next couple of years as the revkom was consistently accused of inaction and corruption, and he was eventually removed in September 1925, along with many other members of the local leadership (Marshall, 2010, 171). The initial purge of the leadership had actually begun in the spring

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<sup>64</sup>At this juncture, the Cossacks were ultimately granted their demand for some degree of regional autonomy, though again their demands for a Cossack AO were rebuffed (Baranov, 2005).

of 1924 in response to widespread local unrest in Chechnya, with rigged elections to *revkoms* (extraordinary in and of itself since they were supposed to have been replaced by *ispolkoms* by this time) and a disarmament drive aimed at quelling local dissatisfaction; similar disarmament operations were enacted in Dagestan, Ossetia and Ingushetia and the Karachai had already been subjected to this in 1922 (Marshall, 2010, 173).

Dagestan, meanwhile, demonstrated remarkable persistence considering the extraordinary number of ethnic groups coexisting within its boundaries<sup>65</sup>. The dramatic challenge facing the Soviets was highlighted in a report from the Gunibskii *revkom*<sup>66</sup> from the 9th of May, 1920, which detailed the problems encouraging the local population to accept Bolshevik power. The proposed solution was to assemble an armed group of 200-250 people to enforce the power of the *revkom*; Red Army troops were on no account to be used because, in the words of the Chair of the local *revkom*, they were ‘complete unfamiliar with local customs’ and could ‘initiate large numbers of undesirable conflicts’ that would further damage the standing of the Bolsheviks in the region (Памазанов, 1962). By September of 1920 the Dagestanskii Bureau of the Bolsheviks was forced into making an address directed at the poor of the oblast, particularly in the mountainous regions, who had proven unwilling to embrace Soviet power and were still clinging to traditional forms of societal organisation, including fealty to the Cossacks, which was seen as a major threat. The Bureau blamed this primarily on the fact that the best party workers were located in the cities of Derbent, Shura and Petrovsk and had thus recently dispatched many of them to the mountainous auls in an attempt to overcome this problem (Бюро, 1962).

This region, the furthest east of the territories in the North Caucasus, had been granted autonomy by Stalin in late 1920 and Donogo argues this was in the hope of splitting the nascent rebellion in the Terek region by separating Dagestan and the Mountain ASSR

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<sup>65</sup>To gain an understanding of this, we refer the interested reader to Институт Истории (1962), which contains a series of reports from the different Dagestani okrugs in 1920 and 1921 reporting on the progress of building Soviets and the severe problems the central *revkom* had in coordinating the enterprise of building Soviet power.

<sup>66</sup>Gunibskii okrug (now raion) is located in the centre of Dagestan.

(Donogo, 2005, 274); the formation of the Dagestan ASSR was confirmed on the 20th of January, 1921. It was not deprived of this status despite the widescale rebellion in 1921-1923<sup>67</sup>, although it was still under the aegis of the North Caucasus kraikom, much to the chagrin of local administrators. It would remain so until April 1925 when it was granted independence from this supervision and fall under the direct authority of Moscow (Marshall, 2010, 191). The Soviets attempted to preserve a careful *modus vivendi* with the Dagestani people, who had greater obeisance to Islam than the other groups in the North Caucasus. This involved moderating the sharia courts (which were not closed until 1927, making Dagestan the last territory in the North Caucasus to have a dual system of law operative) and allowing the less dramatic features of *adat* to persist.

Nevertheless, the Soviets slowly attempted to remake Dagestani society by encouraging widespread immigration from the highlands to the plains in the years after the Civil War, with monetary inducements and large-scale irrigation projects to considerably expand the amount of usable territory in the republic (Marshall, 2010, 191). The ultimate achievements of this programme fell well short of initial hopes, but Marshall is surely right when he argues it represents a ‘striking example of the Bolsheviks’ desire to radically reshape local societies...in ways that were held to offer a better route to modernization and economic equality than the Tsarist-era regional legacy of hopeless rural backwardness, poverty and neglect’ (Marshall, 2010, 193). One of the major challenges for the Soviets in Dagestan was overcoming the hold of Islam on life in the ASSR (which had been strongly linked to the resistance) and there was a major push to open schools and break the hold of religion over education; by 1926 there were 203 schools operative, educating over 25,000 children (Donogo, 2005, 278). However, Ware notes that in 1925 there were 40,000 members of the Islamic clergy, constituting around four percent of the population and by 1928 there were 2,000 functioning mosques, suggesting

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<sup>67</sup>The resistance would continue at a lower level until October 1925, at which point the leader, Gotsinskiy, was arrested and shot. For a detailed look at the specifics of the rebellion in Dagestan and Chechnya in these years, see Donogo (2005).



that a *modus vivendi* had been achieved<sup>68</sup>.

There were, perhaps inevitably given the extremely low levels of support for the Bolsheviks, continuing problems in the western North Caucasus. The Kuban region fostered separatist movements opposed to the imposition of Bolshevik power (Baranov, 2005, 259). Furthermore, Kuban contained one of the poorest and least educated peoples of the North Caucasus in the Adigeyans; remnants of the Circassian/Cherkess people that had once been a prominent force in the region and who were subsequently divided into Adigey, Karachai and Balkar. It is estimated that at the turn of the twentieth century, in the territory that would become the Adigeyan autonomous oblast, there was one school per 22,500 people and that 96% of the pre-revolutionary population was illiterate (Khorotlev, 1958). Adigeya was granted autonomy in 1922 as an autonomous oblast; this marked the first time in its history that the Adigeyan people had been granted its own territory (Dzharimov, 1995); the Cherkess peoples fell under particular suspicion from the tsarist authorities due to the closeness of their perceived links with Turkey and many thousands were deported in the aftermath of the Crimean War (Figes, 2010). In the following years around a third of the budget for the region was devoted to education (*narodnoe obrazovanie*), which entailed building schools for the children and a series of efforts to educate the adults, as well as creating a written script for the first time (Khorotlev, 1958).

By 1924, many of the basic territorial questions had been settled, although they would undergo subsequent revisions under Stalin's centralisation (see the third paper for more details on this). While as we have seen, the Bolsheviks were forced into many compromises, the basic principles of *raionirovanie* and principle of granting greater autonomy to the repressed peoples had helped guide them through the initially difficult period of rule in the North Caucasus. They had faced rebellions, corrupt local officials and the reality of severe economic constraints, but unlike the Yeltsin administration, were able to stay committed to the

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<sup>68</sup>As we shall see in the third paper, this was shattered by a move to persecute and outlaw religion in Dagestan, beginning in 1928 and continuing until the end of the Soviet Union.

guiding principles of policy in creating the administrative framework that would basically persist until the present day. Of equally great importance was the relative flexibility of the ideational framework (not something usually associated with the Bolsheviks, which marks a great misunderstanding of the initial years); Stalin recognised the a purely geographic approach initially envisaged in the 1913 statement of *raionirovanie* was inadequate for the North Caucasus and similarly, the experience of granting too much autonomy to Bashkiria helped the Bolsheviks to limit subsequent claims, rather than using Bashkiria as the baseline for other republics.

At this stage, the Bolsheviks could begin to implement their policy of *korenizatsiia*, which entailed the attempt to develop and advance the local nationalities to make them more suitable for the socialist utopia. As Martin has cogently argued, the Bolsheviks had much in common with later modernisation theorists in terms of believing that there was a single path to the future and all ethnicities would have to travel this; those backward nations (of which many were located in the North Caucasus) were therefore deserving of special help in this regard (Martin, 2001). Table 2.3 shows the extent of illiteracy among the major ethnicities of the North Caucasus as of the 1926 census:

Table 2.3: Literacy rates of major North Caucasus ethnicities as of 1926 census.

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Literacy rate<sup>a</sup></b>
Cherkess <sup>b</sup>	16.9
Karachai	9.2
Kabard	6.8
Balkar	5.3
Ossetians	21.2
Ingush	9.1
Chechens	2.9

<sup>a</sup> Source is Martin (2001, 127).

<sup>b</sup> The Adigey were included with the Cherkess at this stage.

Despite these dispiriting statistics, it cannot be said that the Soviets refused to devote resources to the problem of education. In Kabardino-Balkaria, for example, a quarter of

the region's budget was spent on education in 1924-1925 and nearly a third in 1926-1927. Moreover, the growth in the number of schools was truly impressive, rising from 84 with 3,800 students in 1922-1923 to 169 with 12,128 students in 1925-1926. This represented an increase in the number of school-age children attending school from 8% to 40%; a fivefold increase in four years is quite remarkable and is testimony to the commitment of both the central and local bodies on this front (Бербеков, 1958, 95-96). Meanwhile, 1924 marked the publication of a thrice-weekly newspaper in both the Kabard and Balkar tongues ('Karakhalk' - 'The Poor'), which marked the first regular publication in the local languages, although textbooks and other literature soon followed.

Martin notes that the years of 1924-26 were a period of experimentation for the Bolsheviks in terms of how to achieve successful advancement of the backward nations; these initial years were the marked by funding squabbles (particularly over the Cultural Fund), which soon petered out as the resources for this evaporated (Martin, 2001). This was accompanied by hiring practices that give strict preference to individuals with knowledge of the local language, with the North Caucasus Mountaineer obkom ordering institutions in 1924 'not to accept non-Mountaineers for employment or to hire them only in extreme cases, where there is no local mountaineer' (Martin, 2001, 135). This is not to say there were no tensions between the centre and the North Caucasus kraikom on this score; the latter protested against the decision to begin Ukrainisation in the Kuban region (notwithstanding the fact that over 60% of the okrug's population were Ukrainian) and blocked the Ukrainisation of Cossack schools and districts until they were comprehensively overruled by the Central Committee in December of 1928 following a full-scale investigation of nationalities policy in the region (Martin, 2001, 285-289).

Given the low levels of literacy among the indigenous populations in the North Caucasus, compromises were inevitably made on this front. Nonetheless, in Dagestan, the most complex of all the North Caucasus regions with regards to ethnicity, a complex division of roles along ethnic lines was developed and maintained until the eve of the Second World War (and

reinstated in 1948) (Ware and Kisriev, 2010). Levels of urbanisation were extremely low in this area and as of 1926 only 18% of the population was considered urban (Baranov, 2005, 257).

Looking back over this period, it is clear that the Soviets were unable to solve all of the problems inherent in building their multinational state. Such a task was arguably beyond any authority seeking to maintain the integrity of new Bolshevik state (and subsequently the Soviet Union). As Martin argues, the *raionirovanie* of the country, designed to resolve problems of ethnic identity and overcome Great Russian nationalism, ‘called forth an enormous increase in ethnic mobilization, as well as a considerable growth in ethnic conflict’ (Martin, 2001, 33). This is perhaps an oversimplification, for as we have seen in our overview of the North Caucasus, the ethnic groups needed no real encouragement to fight one another and dispute the tsarist divisions, especially as these related to the Cossacks and other *inogorodnie*<sup>69</sup>. Ware, by way of mitigation, notes that ‘the Soviet Union offered North Caucasians tangible benefits in terms of security and economic development’; a marked change from the tsarist administration and an achievement that the post-Soviets would find difficult to replicate (Ware and Kisriev, 2010, 31).

## 2.4 Post-Soviet Disorder: 1991-1999

If anything, in comparison to the complete chaos facing the Bolsheviks in the weeks after the collapse of the Russian Empire, the task facing Boris Yeltsin in terms of state- and nation-building was arguably simpler. The Soviet Union was undeniably weak and tottering in its final years, but it had not been ravaged by the strains of interstate war, nor was the post-Soviet government faced with the genuine spectre of civil war on a grand scale (the coup attempt and brief battle with parliament in the spring of 1993, while undeniably serious, were not really akin to the post-1917 struggles). Again, unlike in 1917, the victors in 1991 enjoyed

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<sup>69</sup>Martin proposes four mechanisms connecting *raionirovanie* with increased ethnic conflict, drawing strongly on Horowitz’s analysis of stigmatisation of certain ethnic groups (Martin, 2001, 56-57).

widespread international support<sup>70</sup> and immediate legitimacy, meaning that the boundaries of the new Russian Federation were not assailed by any other state. While there was certainly chaos and the reverse-shift from Communism was daunting, the prospects for state-building seemed much more favourable than upon the final death-throes of the Kerensky government.

With respect to nation-building in the North Caucasus, while the relatively crude attitude of the Russian Empire towards the North Caucasus had stoked resentment and presented the Bolsheviks with a relatively simple target against which to aim, the Soviet deportations of peoples from the North Caucasus during the Great Patriotic War and subsequent issues surrounding resettlement likewise provided the incoming Yeltsin administration with the clear opportunity to demonstrate that 1991 marked a clear changing of the guard. Moreover, economic development in the region had, at best, stalled and there was the potential for great strides to be taken in the early years of the post-Soviet reality in terms of integrating the region more fully into the Russian Federation. Finally, the Bolshevik attack on one of the unique features of life in the North Caucasus, namely a *sufi* strain of Islam, had generated significant opposition and provided the Yeltsin government with the opportunity to make the type of relatively costless, yet deeply meaningful, gesture upon which rapprochement and necessary forgetfulness can be founded.

So why is it, as this section will attempt to demonstrate, that the Yeltsin government was systematically unable to resolve the basic challenges of state- and nation-building in these first few years after the fall of the Soviet Union? More piquantly, why was the performance of Yeltsin's government markedly worse than the Bolsheviks on this score given that the latter seemed to face more insuperable obstacles? I argue strongly that the primary reason was that Yeltsin had no clear conception of how to understand these challenges and no theoretical foundation from which to proceed. While there were debates over the meaning of civic and ethnic identity in Russia during the collapse of the Soviet Union and immediately

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<sup>70</sup>The British, for example, did not orchestrate a landing in early-1991 to help bolster the Communists, as Winston Churchill chose to do in 1917 in support of the Whites (Hitchens, 2004, 17).

after, particularly in the extraordinary efforts of Valerii Tishkov and his group to craft an ethnically-neutral civic identity that could take the place of the not-much-loved ‘Sovietskii’, they were never privileged in the Yeltsin administration and merely added to the confusing *mélange* of policies that emanated from the Kremlin.

This is not to say that Yeltsin was entirely bereft of a strategy in the North Caucasus, more that his chosen means for governing the region was woefully inadequate in helping to bind the region closer to the Russian Federation and central authorities. With the exception of Chechnya, which is an extraordinary case and of necessity *sui generis*, we shall see that Yeltsin’s basic plan for the region was to rely on a series of strongmen who could restore order (by dubious means, in many cases) and effectively bribed to pledge fealty to the integrity of the Russian Federation. This was achieved through granting significant autonomy to these leaders and providing generous federal subsidies to the North Caucasus regions (many of which were appropriated by the leaders and their circle for personal enrichment). This may, as Stephen Hanson argues, have helped the Federation to persist, but Yeltsin’s unwillingness to involve federal authorities as mediators in various ethnic clashes, combined with the persistently high levels of unemployment, meant that a chance to reintegrate the region into the new state was squandered. The negative consequences of this are still being felt today as the North Caucasus is viewed by many Russians (and particularly supporters of the nationalist factions in the Duma) as a lost cause and nothing more than a drain on resources.

Yet I also claim that Yeltsin and his advisors are not entirely to blame for this state of affairs. It also reflects a serious malaise in contemporary democratic theory, which has largely failed to advance a compelling and unified theory for how to grapple with state- and nation-building. The confusing overlapping nature of rights claims in such a scenario hamstring neutral observers and the implicit democratic urge to please the populace creates irresolvable headaches when the policies at issue touch on irreconcilable claims to indivisible resources. Unlike contemporary economics, as we shall see in the next paper in this dissertation, which has generated coherent policy proposals to deal with cases of economic

collapse and transition, democratic theorists have struggled to develop an account that can integrate the competing demands of respect for autonomy with the necessary infrastructure to guarantee protection of personal safety and other core rights that are an accepted part of a liberal community.

### 2.4.1 The Intervening Period: 1927-1990

While this paper is not the appropriate place to delve into Soviet history, some joining of the periods between the ending of the last period and the dawn of the Yeltsin era is in order. This will of necessity be at a high level of generalisation, ignoring some of the subtler trends in the relationship between Moscow and the North Caucasus, and will be rather light on changes under Stalin, since these will be covered in more depth in the final paper that constitutes this dissertation as part of the perspective on consolidation.

However, the basic trajectory under Stalin was of increased distrust of the principles of *korenizatsiia* and a shift towards collectivisation as a means to achieve the necessary industrialisation of the country (Martin, 2001). Collectivisation was particularly harsh on the peoples of the North Caucasus due to the extreme shortage of land suitable for farming and the forced requisitions resulting in both starvation and uprisings (Conquest, 1970); it was also the first region to undergo full collectivisation (Gökay, 1998). Stalin's response was to replace many of the local leaders with ethnic Russians and the local cadres were consistently purged (along with much of the country) as Stalin sought to sideline rivals to his power on both the right and left (Hanson, 1997; Conquest, 1990; Gökay, 1998). However, this failed to quell the seeds of resistance in the North Caucasus and during the Great Patriotic War, the commitment of the Red Army to dealing with the existential threat of Hitler's invasion provided sufficient space for a spate of rebellions to break out across the region, especially as the *Wehrmacht* threatened to sweep through the Caucasus (Polian, 2004). Stalin's response was to instruct the NKVD to engage in forced deportations of five indigenous peoples of the

North Caucasus (including the Kalmyks)<sup>71</sup>, which they did with remarkable efficiency and thoroughness, shifting entire ethnicities to Siberia and Central Asia, on occasion in a matter of days<sup>72</sup>. The chief charge laid against all these groups was Nazi collaboration, which had at best tactical accuracy but was part of an overall Stalinist strategy to neuter ‘enemy nations’ that were seen as one of the drivers of the limited success of collectivisation (Martin, 2001).

Table 2.4: Times and dates of deportation of the five Caucasian ethnicities

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Time deported</b>	<b>Number deported (est.)<sup>a</sup></b>
Chechens	1944	387,229
Ingush	1944	91,250
Karachai	January 1943	69,267
Balkars	January 1943	37,300
Kalmyks	December 1943	91,000 - 131,927

<sup>a</sup> All figures in the table are taken from Otto Pohl (1999), with the exception of the high figure for the Kalmyks, which is taken from Smith (2006). The latter is more of a journalistic account and probably less trustworthy, but is included as a point of reference.

These peoples were banned from returning to their ancestral homelands until Khrushchev’s ‘Secret Speech’ in 1956, which denounced the excesses of Stalinism and recognised the deportations as having been unjustified<sup>73</sup> and laid the path for resettlement in 1957-1958. By that time, many of the original houses and lands of the people had been occupied by neighbours or others who had been settled there by the central authorities in the aftermath of the deportation. Khrushchev, preoccupied by other matters relating to the de-Stalinisation of the late 1950s (along with the advancement of the space race and developing events in Cuba), devoted little thought to the complexities of resettlement, and as we shall see, these were live issues during the collapse of the Soviet Union, reinvigorated by the atrophying nature

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<sup>71</sup>This was not the first time the Caucasus had seen widescale population movements; in the years before and after the final conclusion of the Caucasus War in 1864, up to one million indigenous peoples are estimated to have left; though this was more than offset by the considerable immigration of Russians and Cossacks to the area (especially in the Kuban region) (Khuranov, 1984, 150-151).

<sup>72</sup>The best sources for details on the deportations and subsequent resettlements are Polian (2004); Otto Pohl (1999), both of which draw on tremendous amounts of archival research to paint the wrenching pictures of the details of these events.

<sup>73</sup>Khrushchev decried them as having been ‘in no way demanded by military considerations’ (...‘выселение никак не диктовалось военными соображениями’) (Khrushchev, February 25th, 1956).



of central power. There were no major changes to the administration of the North Caucasus until the final years of Gorbachev's rule (and thus the final years of the Soviet Union), at which point we can resume our story by considering the debacle of the Yeltsin period.

## 2.4.2 Yeltsin and Charismatic Confusion

Boris Yeltsin, who would lead the charge of independent states straining to break free from the Soviet Union, was almost the antithesis of Vladimir Lenin. While Lenin was the rare individual who combined a passion for theoretical advancements with practical concerns, Yeltsin was almost exclusively focused on the latter<sup>74</sup>. An engineer by training, he was constantly searching for improvements in his first jobs linked to construction and took more satisfaction from visiting the physical sites than overseeing bureaucratic meetings (Aron, 2000, 40). While he had some loosely connected ideas concerning the value of democracy and local autonomy, they were poorly articulated and broke down rapidly under the stresses in the North Caucasus<sup>75</sup>. Furthermore, the absence of coherent democratic models meant that in contradistinction to the economic sphere, there were few readily implementable guides that Yeltsin (or a team of advisors) could implement. The combination of both of these factors entailed the early years of the post-Soviet experience in the North Caucasus were a damaging morass of failed policies and poorly-judged interventions.

We began the preceding section with a sustained discussion of the relationship between various Marxist interpretations of nationalism and the development of Soviet policy, but

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<sup>74</sup>Yeltsin provoked the ire of the Moscow intelligentsia within a year of arriving in the capital by threatening to close many of the research institutes on the basis that they were not contributing anything to society (Aron, 2000, 146).

<sup>75</sup>Yeltsin in fact refers directly to the early Soviet period in his *View from the Kremlin* during his recounting of the negotiation of the Belovezhskoe Accords, noting that 'The Bolsheviks managed to suppress all the nationalist uprisings [in 1917-1918], forcing peasants and soldiers into a civil war, although the revolution was supposedly spontaneously proletarian. With an iron fist, the Soviets strangled the liberation struggles, executed the national intelligentsia, and dispersed national parties' (Yeltsin, 1994, 112). He sees this as a break with the troubled past, as Russia finally freeing itself from imperial commitments and ceasing to play 'the role of policeman in the resolution of ethnic conflicts' (Yeltsin, 1994, 113). If these were his genuine feelings at the time, they were to be sorely disappointed as the Russian state would be forced to don the uniform to quell its own internal problems in the Caucasus throughout his presidency.

it is almost impossible to mirror that for the post-Soviet case. This is not because the problems of nation-building were any less severe<sup>76</sup> for Boris Yeltsin and his new government, or because the vestiges of the Soviet state were more functional than the network of Soviets in 1917 (although this latter part was true), but rather because Yeltsin was not particularly interested in questions of theoretical debate and abstract musing. Thus, in Timothy Colton's extraordinary biography of Yeltsin, drawing on vast previously-unpublished material, there is barely any mention of Yeltsin being involved in a theoretical discussion; his exemplary work-ethic and ingenuity for solving problems (especially in construction, where he was certainly *primus inter pares* in Sverdlovsk, then Moscow) shine through, but until very late in the day there is little to suggest that Yeltsin has devoted time or energy to thinking seriously about remaking the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) into a functioning, coherent state in the aftermath of the Soviet Union.

This is not to say that he had given no thought to the nationalities question. Colton notes a schematic sketch of a potential division of the RSFSR made by Yeltsin prior to his move to Moscow that divided Russia into seven or eight republics with the idea of making it self-sufficient from the USSR (Colton, 2008, 99)<sup>77</sup>. His program for the 1988 Congress of People's Deputies stated 'All peoples of the USSR must have real economic, political, and cultural autonomy', although it did not elaborate further on precisely what he meant by that (Aron, 2000, 263)<sup>78</sup>. However, the most accurate description of Yeltsin's general stance in these years is arguably delivered by Colton in his summation of Yeltsin's 'secret

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<sup>76</sup>Although in at least one sense the situation was simpler; the Yeltsin government had no desire to change the administrative system established by the Soviets, with the exception of the separation of Chechnya and Ingushetia which proceeded with a minimal level of federal interference due to the situation in the former republic.

<sup>77</sup>Somewhat ironically, something approximating Yeltsin's scheme would be implemented by Vladimir Putin through the latter's creation of federal districts in 2000. This was largely in response to the perceived absence of federal control in the regions that was the product of Yeltsin's policies throughout the 1990s.

<sup>78</sup>He did, in an interview with an Estonian paper, suggest that 'The Republics are primary...The opinion of a people is primary and so is that of a Republic which represents this people', implying that his remarks were directed towards the Union Republics rather than a more far-reaching claim for all ethnicities, although given that Estonia had recently declared sovereignty, this may be one of the countless examples of Yeltsin perfectly crafting his response to his audience (Aron, 2000, 265).

speech' before the Politburo in October 1987 during which Yeltsin openly attacks Gorbachev and (by implication) the Soviet system. Colton suggests that Yeltsin was not 'adhering to a well-defined program or set of ideas...[his speech] was grounded more in an almost feline instinct for the moment than in ideology' (Colton, 2008, 143).

By 1990 and his decision to stand for the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies, Yeltsin's programme was somewhat better articulated. Colton notes that at this juncture he called for the RSFSR to have 'an elective president, a full-time parliament, a constitutional court, a state bank, an academy of sciences, a territorial militia, and multiple political parties' (Colton, 2008, 179). While this would have required significant changes to the Soviet Constitution, it highlighted the anomalous situation of the RSFSR lacking these institutions in comparison to the other Union Republics, with the call for an elected president and multi-party elections representing his nascent commitment to democracy. On August 5th, 1990 he would make perhaps his most famous (and problematic) statement on the nationalities question facing the Soviet Union (and, by implication, the new Russian Federation), seeking Tatar and Bashkir support (and apparently not having read his early Soviet history on the problems with Bashkiria), he pronounced to the peoples of these republics that they should 'take as much sovereignty as you can swallow!' (Colton, 2008, 186). This was an incredibly piece of political theatre, garnering support from the ethnic regions of the RSFSR against the behemoth of the Soviet Union. However, the lack of firm foundations underlying it would ultimately cause serious problems for Yeltsin and his team over the next few years as they struggled to build independent Russia. It is undeniably true that Yeltsin had a precocious gift for improvisation and problem-solving; these had driven his rise in the Soviet apparatus and would define his presidency, but such gifts were tempered by a failure to develop coherent policies that would prove to be extremely damaging, most notably in the North Caucasus. Reflecting on his memories of the early stages of reform, Yeltsin himself suggests that 'Maybe I was in fact mistaken in choosing an attack on the economic front as the chief direction, *leaving government reorganization to perpetual compromises and political games*'

(Yeltsin, 1994, 127; emphasis mine).

I have argued in an earlier section that part of the problem facing Yeltsin and his team was a reflection of the crisis in liberal theory in terms of the inability of scholars to articulate a framework that would lend itself to coherent policy-making. The point here is not that Yeltsin would ever have been a strident proponent of such a structure for his nationality and state-building policy; his personality was not predisposed to such overarching commitments and his political instincts would have prevented him from strapping himself too firmly to the mast of any long-term programme. Rather the impact was more subtle and can only be seen in comparison with the economic sphere, where a close-knit group of young economists were able (for the most part) to convince Yeltsin of the value and importance of shock therapy in avoiding a return to the days of communism and centralised planning. The absence of an equivalent body of theory effectively undermined the position of Yeltsin's liberal advisors on nationalities policy; Emil Pain and Valerii Tishkov had no internationally-recognised body of theory on which to ground their proposals and I argue this made it far simpler for Yeltsin to move them aside in favour of a more hard-minded set of advisers that contributed to the chaos in the North Caucasus in general and Chechnya in particular. As we shall see below, the conflict in Chechnya would supervene on the situation in the entire North Caucasus through spreading a general sense of disorder and federal neglect, though this should not obscure the general chaos in the region that was taking place regardless of the situation in Chechnya.

Scholars are near-unanimous when it comes to their judgement of the early Yeltsin years in terms of the absence of a coherent framework. Yoi Herrera describes the period from 1991-1993 as 'a Hobbesian every-region for itself state of anarchy that exacerbated regional inequality' and argues that '[t]he lack of an established conceptual structure allowed for the emergence of novel categories of regional politics and economic thinking' (Herrera, 2005, 143). She runs through the confusion of this period with regards to regional-centre politics and the ever-changing institutional framework under Yeltsin in the early years: 'throughout

1992, contradictory understandings of inter-regional and center-regional economic relations proliferated' (Herrera, 2005, 155). Gayle Lapidus similarly criticises the central government for the 'ad hoc, personlized, and improvisational policymaking process exhibiting little professionalism' and suggests that this led directly to the Chechen conflict (Lapidus, 1999, 56). Nikolai Petrov and Darrell Slider note that 'Yeltsin did not take the goal of developing federal principles seriously', thus exposing his nascent federal framework to the whims of local demands and legislative patches (Petrov and Slider, 2007, 77).

However, this is not to say that all of them agree with the argument of this paper that this absence was intensely problematic. Stephen Hanson, for example, offers a comparison of the collapse of the Soviet Union with the persistence of the Russian Federation and suggests that, 'the peaceful breakup of the Soviet Union can be understood as the distinctive product of Marxism-Leninism's delegitimation within a liberal world order, whereas the absence of a coherent ideological basis for Yeltsin's regime has ironically made full secession from the Russian Federation much more difficult to legitimate and mobilize' (Hanson, 1999, 18). Hanson believes that Yeltsin's combination of 'coercive and accommodative strategies' were essential in holding together the federation and the fact that 'Yeltsin's regime lacks ideological underpinnings makes it harder to rally people against it' (Hanson, 1999, 33). Gerald Easter advances a similar argument in his work on building fiscal capacity, suggesting that Yeltsin used his relationships with regional leaders to offset the crisis in the centre. Thus, 'the state resembled a medieval mosaic of competing political and economic fiefdoms, in which governing capabilities often appeared to be enfeebled...But in granting concessions, Yeltsin did not give up the central state's ultimate claim on their use' (Easter, 2006, 23). Taking a slightly different angle, Kathryn Stoner-Weiss suggests that the actions of the central state were largely irrelevant during the initial years because the regions had agglomerated such a significant degree of power in the late Soviet period (Stoner-Weiss, 2006).

Thus there is sufficient debate over the role and value of Yeltsin's reliance on pragmatism to make this section of the paper valuable (though everyone agrees about the absence of a

coherent framework). We should also note that the political scientists above are interested in the general nature of centre-periphery relations without much focus on the North Caucasus. In that sense, the North Caucasus is the most demanding test for Hanson *et al.*'s claims that Yeltsin's approach was either beneficial or irrelevant to solving the problems of reinstituting central authority and overcoming the persistent problems of underdevelopment in the region.

As with the Soviet case, there are more than enough events and personalities in the North Caucasus during the initial post-Soviet years to fill a monograph. We do not have sufficient space in this paper to do justice to the degree of complexity, but we do not have to delve into all the details to present a convincing case that Yeltsin's policies were inconsistent and problematic, lacking any genuine overall structure. With the exception of Chechnya, which was *sui generis*, the basic strategy for Yeltsin and the federal government was to attempt to distance themselves from local politics in the North Caucasus, relying on strongmen to run the regions as they saw fit. While Yeltsin initially installed a relatively liberal team of advisors on nationalities policy, headed by Emil Pain, the events in Chechnya drew him to a more uncompromising set of ministers who were simultaneously unwilling to compromise on the question of Chechen autonomy and uninterested in resolving other problems in the North Caucasus.

We should note that Yeltsin's initial support among the people of the North Caucasus was certainly higher than that of the Bolsheviks. In the elections for the Presidency of the RSFSR in June 1991, which took place in the death throes of the Soviet Union, he polled remarkably well among residents of the region, with the marked exception of the North Ossetians who favoured Ryzhkov. As is the case for all electoral results from this region (with the exception of Krasnodar), these figures should be treated with some degree of suspicion in terms of their ability to represent the feelings of the general populace, rather than influential figures in society. Nevertheless, the fact that this suggests that Yeltsin did enjoy support among such figures is in itself testimony to the fact that the situation was far more promising for him than the Bolsheviks.

Table 2.5: Results from the RSFSR Presidential Election, June 1991

<b>Region</b>	<b>Yeltsin vote (%)<sup>a</sup></b>
Adigeya	46.38
Dagestan	65.86
Checheno-Ingushetia <sup>b</sup>	89
Kabardino-Balkaria	63.88
Karachaevo-Cherkessia	61.76
Krasnodar	45.89
North Ossetia	27.34

<sup>a</sup> Source: Orttung (2000) for all regions except Checheno-Ingushetia.

<sup>b</sup> Soulemainov (2007, 85).

In large part, support for Yeltsin reflected the fact that the major ethnic groups were extremely unhappy with their position in the Soviet Union by the time of its dissolution. In April 1991 the RSFSR passed a Law on the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples, calling for the restitution of territory to all who were repressed by the Soviet Union, which gave hope to the groups who had suffered deportation under Stalin but was seriously threatening to the Ossetians, who had occupied large parts of the *Prigorodnyi raion* on the outskirts of Vladikavkaz following the forced removal of the Ingush. Yeltsin's calls for greater autonomy were perceived as extremely dangerous in this regard by the population of North Ossetia, which partly explains the low levels of support for his candidacy. We shall have more on the chaos in Ingushetia below.

As we have mentioned above, Yeltsin's initial team of advisors on nationalities policy was relatively liberal (certainly compared to what was to come), with Emil Pain and Valerii Tishkov occupying prominent roles in his administration.

Chechnya is the archetypal case for those seeking to establish the extremely negative implications of the flux and uncertainty of the Yeltsin period in centre-regional relations and is the North Caucasus republic that has received by far the greatest attention in the literature as a consequence of having seen two bloody wars fought on its territory. This is understandable given the interest in civil conflict and counterinsurgency in political science,

but also unfortunate since the other republics provide valuable information on the extent to which Yeltsin's pragmatism undermined their development and generated fertile ground for a spreading Islamist insurgency. Nonetheless, it is impossible to ignore Chechnya, although this paper will not cover even a fraction of the vast literature on the conflicts between the federal troops and local fighters (Lyll, 2008, 2009; Zhukov, 2010). We shall, however, provide a brief overview of the major events and the dynamics leading up to the first conflict in 1994.

The All-National Congress of the Chechen People approved a Declaration of Independence in November 1990 that made no reference to either the USSR or the RSFSR and this was clarified by Dzhokhar Dudayev, a former general in the USSR air force, who declared the formation of the independent state of Chechnya as head of the National Congress of the Chechen People in November 1990<sup>79</sup> (Soulemainov, 2007), following Tatarstan which had also declared independence in 1990 under the leadership of Mintimer Shaimiev. It is worth noting that Dudayev and the National Congress strongly supported Yeltsin against the putschists and Soulemainov notes an 'explicit kinship' between Yeltsin and Dudayev in terms of their desire to overthrow the structures of the Soviet Union (Soulemainov, 2007, 85).

From 1991 to 1994, Chechnya effectively functioned as an independent state, notwithstanding some disastrous Russian attempts to overthrow Dudayev and internal disputes over the latter's authority. These attempts, ranging from the humiliating retreat of *spetsnaz* in November 1991, to the failure of a subsequent mission to reach Chechnya, alienated large sections of the Chechen population and served to strengthen Dudayev's hold on power (Soulemainov, 2007). Dzhabrail Gakaev, one of the pre-eminent experts on Chechnya, goes as far as arguing that absent Yeltsin's declaration of a state of emergency in Chechnya in November 1991, 'the chances of the Dudayev group holding on to power were practically nil' (Gakaev, 2005, 22). Dudayev was by no means impregnable; the northern part of Chechnya, which had large numbers of ethnic Russians, was opposed to the declaration of sovereignty and

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<sup>79</sup>The final declaration of sovereignty and separation from the Russian Federation would occur almost exactly one year later, following some ill-advised manoeuvring by Ruslan Khasbulatov, who had been systematically sidelined by Dudayev (Soulemainov, 2007).



Dudayev made few friends by dissolving the Parliament and then the Constitutional Court in April, 1992. Moreover, the provisional Chechen government proved equally as inept as its federal counterpart in rebuilding the shattered Chechen economy, with wage arrears beginning in mid-1991 for state workers (Soulemainov, 2007). Russo-Chechen talks that seemed promising in 1992 and 1993 ultimately led nowhere as Moscow's offer to Chechnya of a special status within the federation was rejected.

In late 1993, under pressure as a result of the unexpected performance of Vladimir Zhirinovsky's hardline nationalist LDPR in parliamentary elections, Yeltsin replaced his liberal advisors on nationality politics with a more uncompromising set of personnel. Chief among these was Sergei Shakhrai, who seemed to have a personal animus against Chechnya (he was a Terek Cossack) and pushed Yeltsin to exert greater pressure on the republic, openly supporting alternatives to Dudayev, which effectively torpedoed any chance they may have had of gaining local support. The first Chechen War would begin in December 1994 as the Russian authorities had failed to generate sufficient political opposition to Dudayev, not least due to the ineptitude of their chosen candidates (Soulemainov, 2007). It would conclude in August of 1996, with little achieved besides an agreement to defer discussions of Chechnya's status until December 2001 (Soulemainov, 2007). This was, in the words of Matthew Evangelista, 'Yeltsin's war - to win, to lose, or to avoid altogether, if he had so chosen' (Evangelista, 2002, 11). The period from 1996 to the second declaration of war in late 1999 was overseen by the Presidency of Aslan Maskhadov and an uneasy *modus vivendi* with federal authorities, who largely ignored the Chechen problem until Putin decided to renew hostilities (a topic for the third paper).

While Chechnya is the classic example of Yeltsin's failure and inconsistency with regard to governance in the North Caucasus, there is a reasonable argument to be made that the situation was so hopeless as to be largely beyond the remit of any possible government in the early post-Soviet years. This is not to excuse the mistakes or petulance of many of the decisions and the outcome of war should certainly have been avoided, but Yeltsin was dealt

an unenviable hand. We have seen that the Soviets similarly struggled to impose order in Chechnya for the first few years of their rule, so it seems reasonable to argue that this is not the best comparison if we are seeking to argue that Yeltsin's lack of a coherent framework was disastrous.

Fortunately for the argument of this paper (but not for the people involved), the states on either side of Chechnya provide a vivid example of the extremely problematic consequences of the absence of a consistent policy in the North Caucasus. Both of these republics are excellent examples of the extent to which Yeltsin and his administrations were content to allow local politicians to run the republics with markedly limited federal interference, beyond the disbursement of funds to help the struggling administrations. While to some extent this allowed space for creative solutions to ongoing issues, it also failed to generate any sense of fealty to the central authorities and limited the understanding of situations at the federal level, both of which resulted in storing significant problems for the future.

Ingushetia, which lies to the immediate west of Chechnya and was long included in the same territorial organisation, finally severed ties with Chechnya in 1992 following the decision of the Chechen parliament to restore the 1934 borders<sup>80</sup>. It was one of the more benighted republics, lacking any real industry or economic advantages that could help it develop; while it has the potential for oil and gas extraction, the crippling lack of capital investment entailed these were largely unrealised dreams.

However, Ingushetia's most obvious problem stems from the influx of refugees, both from Chechnya (in 2001 up to a third of the population was estimated to be refugees) but also from the Prigorodnyi conflict, which started in April 1991 and concluded in October 1992 with 700 estimated deaths. This conflict is between Ingushetia and North Ossetia and concerns the land surrounding Vladikavkaz that was occupied following the deportation of

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<sup>80</sup>This followed a petition in 1988-89 by the Ingush people clamouring for independence. As Orttung notes, this was the one territorial resolution in the North Caucasus that was resolved without bloodshed (Orttung, 2000, 131). Somewhat ironically, it was also the sole instance where the Russian federal authorities were completely irrelevant given the quasi-independent nature of Chechnya at this juncture.

the Ingush. While 2,000 federal troops were dispatched to quell the fighting in 1992 and a tentative peace accord was signed in 1997, Yeltsin largely relied on Ruslan Aushev, the President of Ingushetia, to attempt to restore the badly frayed relations between Aushev's territory and North Ossetia. Aushev also played a critical role in mediating between Yeltsin and Aslan Maskhadov and was strongly in favour of avoiding conflict in Chechnya (largely for this reason he was encouraged to resign by Putin at the start of the latter's presidency).

If the Yeltsin administration had implemented a coherent plan for economic development in the region that could have lowered the extraordinary high levels of unemployment (see table 2.6), this could have served to lower the demands on Aushev and generated some level of goodwill towards the central government. However, rather than commit to a long-term plan, the Yeltsin government bizarrely declared it a off-shore zone (*offshornaya zona*) in July, 1994, with huge tax benefits for those registering companies there<sup>81</sup> (Freedland, 2000, 94). By the end of Yeltsin's second term, Ingushetia was the poorest republic in the country and could only cover 12% of expenditures from its own revenue base (Orttung, 2000, 130).

The other side of the dispute, North Ossetia, has also struggled with issues of development and had its own refugee crisis, as fellow-ethnics from South Ossetia fled the Georgian Civil War in the early 1990s and settled in the republic, further exacerbating the intense issue of overpopulation (North Ossetia was the most densely populated territory in Southern Russia as of the 2000 census (Dzidzoev, 2010)). The first President of the republic was Aksarbek Galazov, who was acting head until his formal election in 1994. He took a strong line against the resolution of the conflict with Ingushetia and notably limited progress was made until his replacement in 1998 by Aleksandr Dzasokhov (Orttung, 2000), who signed an agreement on refugee repatriation with Aushev in March 1999, the latest of a series of attempted resolutions to problems in the North Caucasus in which the central authorities have been largely a bystander. Galazov also oversaw the stalling of development in the republic, leaving

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<sup>81</sup>This cartoonish strategy of having an offshore zone located on the periphery of Russia would seem absurd were it not for the equally strange accounts of business relationships in Alena Ledeneva's research (Ledeneva, 2006).

Dzasokhov with limited room for manoeuvre and a large part of the latter's electoral appeal was his business background and ability to extract further federal subsidies.

The situation in Dagestan, which lies to the east of Chechnya, provides another example of central irrelevance. The former Soviet rulers realigned themselves using tribal and ethnic claims (just as Bates would predict (Bates, 1983)) and then moved to craft a constitution and electoral law that would respect ethnic boundaries and resolve many of the potential problems of order by a careful, quasi-consociational arrangement. The central actors are complete absent from this tale and barely merit a mention in a recent history of the region; Ware and Kisriev note that their first intervention in Dagestani politics comes in September 1998 (supporting the re-election of Magomedov to the Presidency in Dagestan), just over a year before Yeltsin would leave office (Ware and Kisriev, 2010)<sup>82</sup>. Ware and Kisriev argue that this attitude characterised the federal government's 'chronic failure to understand Dagestan' following the reduction in central aid and inevitable economic and developmental problems that followed from this (Ware and Kisriev, 2010, 140).

Aslan Dzharimov was elected President of Adigeya in January 1992 as a result of a repeat ballot; the parliament had 100 deputies, of whom in the first election 49 were ethnic Russians, 45 Adigey and the remainder from different nationalities (Dzharimov, 1995, 33). Adigeya had been upgraded to the status of a republic in June 1991 (Dzharimov, 1995). Dzharimov claims that work on a new Constitution for Adigeya began in March 1992 and originally included the contentious phrase 'sovereign democratic state' (Dzharimov, 1995, 39). However, it seems that the fight over the federal-level Russian Constitution was sufficient to force a reconsideration of this statement and that by the time it was approved by the legislature in March 1995, this language had been expunged (Dzharimov, 1995). While Adigeya has relatively high levels of mineral resources, it is sorely lacking in infrastructure, although Dzharimov did push some degree of land privatisation and economic reforms, helped by the

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<sup>82</sup>Ware does note that the local leaders were always adept at skimming off federal funding for their own purposes, but this is hardly a convincing case of reasserting Muscovite control over Makhachkala (Ware and Kisriev, 2010, 44).

insulated nature of Adigeya (it is entirely contained within Krasnodar krai) (Orttung, 2000). This relative stability explains the consistently lower levels of unemployment, but Adigeya has not and does not receive much attention relative to events further east.

The final republics in the North Caucasus, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia do not deviate from this general pattern. The former continues the theme of the non-Chechen republics and was dominated by an ethnic Kabardin (Valerii Kokov) throughout the 1990s. This is perhaps no surprise given Kokov's strong support for the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, although he took an extremely uncompromising stance on the issue of repatriation of Balkar land, which contributed to serious (and unnecessary) tensions between the Kabards and the Balkars that was another legacy of the Soviet deportations. The Balkars consistently looked to Moscow to act as an intermediary in the dispute, but the federal authorities ignored Balkar demands and left the governing of the republic to Kokov, who outlawed the main Balkar political party and the Congress of Balkar People in 1996 following the latter's declaration of Balkar sovereignty (Meskhidze, 2008). Karachaevo-Cherkessia has been calmer than the other republics (with the exception of Adigeya), but it has also faced separatist claims, with the Karachai, Cherkess and Cossack populations all clamouring for their own state at the end of 1991. This republic was the last of all the Russian republics to hold elections; Yeltsin appointed the Communist-era leader, Vladimir Khubiev, to the post and he delayed elections until 1999, at which point widespread protests finally forced his hand (Orttung, 2000). Yeltsin cannot be faulted for desiring the initial degree of stability afforded by Khubiev, but the absence of federal pressure on Khubiev allowed him to continue in the post and avoid serious oversight, storing significant problems of interethnic relations for the 1999 elections.

Alongside these ongoing problems of order, unemployment would remain stubbornly high in the North Caucasus throughout the entire Yeltsin presidency, underlining the absence of a coherent developmental plan to assist the region in moving away from its dependence on agriculture and the reliance on informal channels to acquire the necessities to maintain

a subsistence-level of standard of living. The fact that these jobs were typically under the control of republican or ethnic leadership meant that impetus for change was stifled throughout the region (though Kabardino-Balkaria provided a heartening example with the defeat of Kokov). There is little doubt that the violence and instability contributed to these extraordinary problems, although even in the western North Caucasus the levels were alarming by the end of the Yeltsin presidency. Note that as with much of the data from the North Caucasus, these figures should be viewed with a somewhat sceptical eye, but nonetheless the general pattern seems clear and is entirely consistent with the general policy of neglect that marked the various Yeltsin administrations' attitude to the North Caucasus.

Table 2.6: Unemployment rates for the North Caucasus region

	<b>Unemployment (%)</b>				
<b>Region</b>	1992 <sup>a</sup>	1994 <sup>b</sup>	1995 <sup>b</sup>	1997 <sup>b</sup>	1999 <sup>b</sup>
Adigeya	7.7	12.7	11.7	12.3	19.6
Dagestan	12.5	14.7	22.3	28.9	30.4
Ingushetia		45.2	58.2	51.8	
Kabardino-Balkaria	9.4	14.8	14.7	17.7	25.1
Karachaevo-Cherkessia	6.0	11.9	24	18.9	21.4
Krasnodar	6.0	7.8	8.8	16.5	15.2
North Ossetia	2.3	2.7	24.0	22.2	32.0
Chechnya	No data				

<sup>a</sup> Orttung (2000).

<sup>b</sup> Data taken from the Goskomstat annual publication for the relevant year.

Thus we see that for the Yeltsin administration, a costly form of pragmatism was the guiding principle for governing the North Caucasus in the 1990s. While this was perhaps of great importance in the initial period of separation from the Soviet Union in terms of securing the loyalty of the fissiparous republics, the failure to make a serious effort to reclaim the autonomy granted entailed that the cycle of corruption and violence continued in the region. In particular, the reliance on local hardmen and the unwillingness to intervene directly in a number of local conflicts undermined any attempt to build central authority, although in reality this was always going to be difficult after the disastrous war in Chechnya. Yeltsin's

general lack of interest in developing an ideational framework, combined with the failure of any members of his team on nationalities to articulate one, was a major driver of this unfortunate result and continues to affect both the low developmental trajectories of the republics in the North Caucasus and the slow spread of radical terrorism in the region.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Поникни снежною главой,  
Смирись, Кавказ: идет Ермолов!  
*Bow your snowy head,*  
*Submit, O Caucasus: Ermolov approaches!*

*Pushkin, The Prisoner of the Caucasus (1822)*

So wrote Russia's greatest poet in a paean to the general who was instrumental in securing the obeisance of the Caucasus to the Russian Empire. The imperial strategy of governing the region was harsh and unrelenting, relying almost entirely on force of arms and alliances with the few ethnicities who sought the certainty of Russian rule compared to the crushing uncertainties of raids and blood feuds that had marked the region for centuries. By the time the imperial hold on the region was secured, in 1864, the great cracks in the edifice of rule had started to emerge; the serfs had been liberated in 1861 and the Crimean War had ended in near-humiliation for the Russian forces. Cruelty to non-Russian ethnicities was also beginning to cause serious problems of disorder and the flames of revolution that had been ignited by the Decembrists in 1825 continued their slow burn throughout the great Russian cities and abroad.

These factors would ultimately unite in the great conflagration of 1917, a revolution that entrusted the keys to a moribund state to a group of revolutionaries with little experience in governing and facing both the German army and an impending Civil War that would fundamentally alter the nature of societal relations in Russia. As we have emphasised throughout this paper, state- and nation-building are hard irrespective of the political and social situa-

tion and are processes that are best achieved over the course of decades, ideally with some separation between the two. Rarely can a situation have been less favourable than that facing the Bolsheviks in the early days of 1918, with the embers of Revolution growing colder and the magnitude of the task ahead becoming evident. Perhaps no region of the country was less promising than the North Caucasus, a region in which the Bolsheviks enjoyed at best marginal levels of support and which, thanks to the Cossack population, provided significant support for Denikin and his White forces during the Civil War. Even those groups who opposed Denikin did not look kindly on the Bolsheviks beyond a marriage of convenience, seeking to protect their nascent autonomy from Muscovite or Petersburg intrusion.

By way of contrast, the situation facing Boris Yeltsin and his administration in December 1991 at the expiration of the Soviet Union, while undeniably difficult, was not as desperate as the equivalent set of circumstances seventy three years earlier. For a start, there was no genuine threat of civil war and whilst there were secessionist rumblings in Tatarstan and Chechnya along with a number of unresolved ethnic disputes as part of the legacy of the Soviet Union, the prospects of open conflict were limited. The North Caucasus republics were consistently among the poorest with regard to the other territories of the Russian Federation, but compared to their desperate state in 1917, basic infrastructure and human capital were there and potentially ready to be invested in productive industries.

Given all this, why do we see the relatively dramatic divergence in establishment of central authority and commitment to modernising and developing the North Caucasus between the two, and not in the direction we should *a priori* expect? This paper has strongly argued that the crucial difference between the two periods was the presence of an ideological framework possessed by the Bolsheviks that allowed them to navigate the initial years of intense confusion and begin to implement their policies centred on developing the repressed peoples of the Russian Empire and generating some institutional structures to safeguard their autonomy. We have seen that a major spur for the development of Bolshevik thinking was the work of Bruno Bauer and his belief in the importance of territorial autonomy for distinc-



tive ethnicities; Stalin adopted this with minor modifications in his important theoretical contributions to the nationalities debate and was able to implement them in virtue of his position as Commissar of Nationalities. Unlike in future periods, the Bolshevik framework was also sufficiently flexible in these early years to allow for modifications in the face of serious challenges: the shift of *raionirovanie* to include ethnicity was a critical part of establishing the governing apparatus in the North Caucasus, as was the commitment to allowing for the continuing practise of Sharia law, especially in the eastern part of the region.

Yeltsin and his administrations lacked any grounding principles for governance beyond an ethereal and rapidly-compromised commitment to democracy and the initial commitment to regional autonomy generated a thoroughly problematic precedent that Yeltsin was unwilling to revoke. His initial administration had a somewhat liberal attitude towards the North Caucasus, although this was more realistically characterised as thoroughly *laissez-faire*, with the instalment of Soviet-era functionaries as leaders of various republics in the region and an absence of concern for brewing interethnic crises. The Prigorodnyi crisis is the most obvious, but the unwillingness to become involved in the Balkar-Kabard conflict, which should have been resolvable with limited federal involvement, is equally compelling. The deterioration of relations with Chechnya opened the way for a harder group of advisors, dominated by power ministers such as Pavel Grachev of Defence, to advocate for an ill-advised military intervention that had knock-on and destabilising effects in the entire North Caucasus region, while simultaneously ignoring the crippling unemployment rates that benighted the republics (and continue to do so).

I have no wish to elide the problems of Bolshevik rule. As we have seen, violence was an undeniable part of their armoury for re-establishing authority and the chaotic deportation of the Cossacks in the initial years reflected both a prejudice against oppressor nations and an inability to restrain the local actors who professed nominal allegiance to their cause. The founding of the Cheka and establishment of local branches along with the subsequent policy of collectivisation generated widespread discontent and set the stage for the subsequent

deportations of entire peoples from the region (more on this in the third paper).

However, the basic point of this paper is that we must learn to take ideational factors more seriously in our discourse of political (and social) science. Material factors are largely mute when it comes to helping us understand why the Bolsheviks and Yeltsin administrations varied when faced with markedly similar decisions. There is much more work to be done on the North Caucasus, which is a fascinating and varied region that has been inexcusably neglected. But at this juncture, this paper (and writer) must fall silent.

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## Chapter 3

# Not all Frames are Created Equal: A Comparison of Early Soviet and Post-Soviet Economic Policy

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# Introduction

If root-and-branch economic reform is one degree removed from the complexity of state- and nation-building in the chaos of post-imperial environments, it is no less transformative in terms of the impact on the daily lives of the affected citizenry and has similarly large implications for social welfare in a country. Dramatic shifts in the ownership of the means of production and huge changes in the regulations on the use of capital require time and patience for their successful realisation, as old customs and exchange relations must be unlearned and new habits and consumption patterns formed. However, as we have seen in the first paper, time is in extremely short supply in such situations<sup>1</sup>. Large parts of the citizenry understandably grow quickly frustrated with the fall in living standards that often accompany such changes<sup>2</sup>, putting the new masters of the economy under great pressure to demonstrate tangible results or offer a convincing justification for the slow progress by touting the bright future that awaits following the successful negotiation of the transitional period. While making a clean break with the past and preventing costly reversions are understandably considered to be of incalculable importance for the new government, the process of deep structural reforms also places huge demands on the population to absorb these changes and adjust to the new economic realities, which often require wholesale adjustments to many aspects of life.

As the events of the past few years have demonstrated, most societies find even relatively minor tweaks to the structures of their economy to be overwhelming and extraordinarily painful, triggering widespread societal protest and the fall of governments. These adjustments generate claims that the basic social contract between the people and their elected masters has been violated and that basic precepts of justice involving predictability and

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Hanson wrote a fascinating book on the attempts of the Bolsheviks to alter the nature of time and inculcate a ‘revolutionary’ understanding that would allow them to accomplish more in short periods, but ultimately this proved to be a quixotic endeavour (Hanson, 1997).

<sup>2</sup>Famously characterised by Adam Przeworski’s J-curve (Przeworski, 1991), though this was modified in an important fashion by Joel Hellman to take account of the political process and the role of ‘winners’ (Hellman, 1998).

certainty of the relation between action and consequence are being sacrificed for economic expediency<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, the majority of developed countries have arrived at a basic consensus on the appropriate structuring of economic relations and it has been a number of years since any genuinely new project for economic policy has been launched<sup>4</sup>. With very few exceptions, most now accept the need for the ‘neoliberal straitjacket’ that restrains government spending and gives increasing prominence to private actors due to perceived inefficiencies of state action and concerns about individual liberty. While there is a lively and ongoing debate about the appropriate relationship between democracy and capitalism in the field of comparative political economy, primarily focused on the extent to which government interference with the market is permissible and advisable and the appropriate size of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hall and Soskice, 2001), there is now broad scholarly (and policy) consensus that market-based relations are the only genuine choice for organising economic relations in an advanced economy.

The relative consistency of economic development and broad similarity of paths<sup>5</sup> have had the unfortunate consequence of stifling debate over the relevance and importance of ideational factors in economic discourse. Economics has certainly not been a discipline that has welcomed this kind of analysis, in large part due to the misplaced faith in the rational-scientific approach that ignores non-material drivers of outcomes, but it has been exacerbated by trends in the latter part of the twentieth century. Technical debates over the appropriate estimations and characterisations of growth or effectiveness of government intervention

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<sup>3</sup>The demonstrations in Cyprus over the plan to ‘tax’ the savings deposits of all accounts held in Cypriot banks in recent days are one of a chain of European events demonstrating this claim. The heavy Russian involvement in the Cypriot crisis, combined with the fact that Cyprus is one of the largest sources of Russian FDI (Rossii, 2013), suggests that the Russian Federation has yet to resolve all the economic issues that resulted from the fall of communism.

<sup>4</sup>China presents a fascinating case but I simply don’t know enough about the complexities of the situation in this country to state with any certainty what the likely outcome will be.

<sup>5</sup>As we reach the present day we see that most developed countries have broadly charted the same trajectory in terms of economic advancement, moving through the stages of feudalism to early unregulated capitalism and ending up with something akin to a modern welfare state via Karl Polanyi’s double movement (Polanyi, 1957). T.H. Marshall’s account of the development of capitalism in Britain is a rather exemplary demonstration of this process (Marshall, 1992).

dominate the field, leaving limited space for appreciation of the intellectual roots of government policy and the impact that ideational factors have exerted on the great socioeconomic transformations of the past few hundred years. While there are a few notable exceptions in political science (Blyth, 2002; Darden, 2009; Herrera, 2005), for the most part political economy draws on the language of incentives and regressions, rather than frameworks and ideas, in its analysis of the generation and implementation of economic policy. This leaves economists and political scientists largely bereft of tools when a situation arises that calls for dramatic reform of an underlying economy, since many of the tools and policies that have been crafted are suited to an advanced economy that has resolved basic problems of industry, employment and consumption. In an ironic twist, contemporary macroeconomics is repeating the errors of the Marxists of the late nineteenth century in building a policy toolkit that is wholly unsuited to resolving the basic problems of underindustrialised and transitional economies<sup>6</sup>.

However, it was not ever thus. We have not even reached the sesquicentennial of some of the most significant experiments in the organisation of economic relations, from the Paris Commune to the autarky of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, from the drawn-out debates over mercantilism to the emergence of the welfare state (Shafer, 2005; Heckscher, 1955). Moreover the twentieth century was the locus of one of the great debates between alternative economic paradigms, as the Soviet Union and the West competed to demonstrate that their system provided the highest standard of living for their populations and that the alternative came with unavoidable and unacceptable moral costs. We can trace the origins of these positions to the nineteenth century, for as we shall see in this paper the debates involving leading actors in the Second International exerted a strong influence over the formulation of Bolshevik economic policy in the early years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the genus of neoclassical economics that would come to dominate

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<sup>6</sup>State-led industrialisation and import-substitution were two alternatives that gained great prominence in the mid-to-late twentieth century, but were largely the product of specific economic circumstances that are somewhat unlikely to be repeated (Johnson, 1982).



twentieth century thinking can be found in the work of Alfred Marshall. The relationship between socialism and capitalism was dynamic and the organisation of economic life in the Soviet Union prompted advocates of the classical form of capitalism to develop the economic doctrine of neoliberalism as a response. This body of work would exert a significant influence over economic theory and practise in the latter half of the twentieth century in terms of its rejection of Keynesianism and denial of any prominent government role in the economy. We shall witness our own curious form of double movement in this paper; the origins of neoliberalism were in opposition to the Soviet system, yet it would find its apogee in restructuring of the economy of the Russian Federation following the collapse of socialism in 1991 under the combined aegis of a team of local New Reformers and foreign experts, both schooled in recent advances in economic theory.

This paper builds on the foundations outlined in the introduction and the research on state-building from the first paper to examine the impact and importance of ideational factors on Russia's recent economic history. While, as suggested above, many countries have followed a common path over their recent history, Russia represents a stark exception to this general rule. Russia entered the twentieth century as a society still possessing many vestigial traces of feudalism resulting from the thoroughly incomplete Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861. Under the aegis of first Sergei Witte and more comprehensively Pyotr Stolypin, attempts were made to develop a modern form of capitalism through state-led industrialisation (Gerschenkron, 1962), but this was cut short by the November Revolution and was stalling long before that. At this stage, the country embarked on the world's first full-scale communist experiment under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, before finally pivoting to a somewhat wild form of capitalism based on the recommendations of neoclassical economics in the 1990s<sup>7</sup>. To negotiate one major economic reform in a century is difficult, two is remarkable, but three rather beggars belief and it is of no surprise to anyone studying contemporary Russian

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<sup>7</sup>For an extraordinary account of the nature of Russian capitalism in the 1990s, see Freedland (2000), written by the former Moscow correspondent of the *Financial Times* who had unusual access to many of the central figures (and some extremely interesting side characters) in her writing of the book.

politics that the country and many of its citizens still bear the scars of these changes<sup>8</sup>.

Continuing the central theme of the dissertation, this paper focuses on the latter two of these radical restructurings and advances a comparison of early Bolshevik rule with the early post-Soviet Russian Federation in order to assess the impact of ideational factors on policy making in times of crisis. The focus in this instance is on the economic sphere and involves a contrast between the communist-inspired move away from the proto-capitalism of the late Russian Empire with the almost reverse-movement from communism to capitalism in the early 1990s under the stewardship of Yegor Gaidar and his acolytes. As we shall see, neither of these transitions was smooth and there was a significant extent of backsliding and compromises in the early years in order to appease various important stakeholders. The Bolsheviks had serious internal struggles over the appropriate formulation of policy centred chiefly around the appropriate means of dealing with the peasantry and the financial sector, while the post-Soviets tried to implement radical market reforms without alienating large sections of the Russian population and an obstreperous, unreformed parliament that was little inclined to help facilitate this shift. Having seen in the first paper on state-building that the Bolshevik predilection towards developing a coherent ideational framework far surpassed that of Boris Yeltsin and his administrations and that this contributed to consistent crafting of policy in this realm, we might *a priori* expect the same to hold in the economic realm, notwithstanding the fact that Yeltsin's experience in the construction industry provided him with familiarity with the economic contradictions inherent in the late-Soviet system. In fact, we should probably expect this *a fortiori* given the centrality of economics to the Marxist analysis that was the theoretical core of the Bolshevik position. Unlike questions over nationality policy and state-building, which were tangential to most debates among leading European socialists who broadly assumed them to be irrelevant and a transitory

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<sup>8</sup>As an illustrative example, the family with whom I lived while conducting fieldwork in Krasnodar preferred to use a sewage tank in the courtyard of their house rather than rely on the local government to deal with this rather unpleasant task since their level of trust in the latter organisation had been thoroughly enervated by their experiences.

feature of the pre-socialist environment, all the leading thinkers of the left at this time had much to say about the collapse of capitalism and the nature of advanced economies and the historical record is rich with their predictions, disagreements and diagnoses.

However, when we start to examine the issue in depth, we find almost the reverse of the result in the first paper. To be more explicit, the Bolshevik economic policies in the initial post-revolutionary period were a confusing mess, swaying uneasily between full-scale implementation of hardline communist reforms during War Communism and capitalist concessions during the New Economic Policy. The latter was belated recognition of the fact that the country they inherited was underindustrialised and far from the beacon of capitalist advancement that Marx and Engels prophesied to be the motor of collapse for the global economic system, as well as a realisation that the excesses of War Communism were haemorrhaging support and self-defeating. By way of contrast, the early years of post-communist rule followed the path of neoliberal reform under the leadership of Yegor Gaidar and his team, strongly influenced by trends in economic discourse of the preceding twenty years and the rejection of Keynesianism by the Chicago and Virginia Schools. It is true that the implementation of Gaidar's economic programme was obstructed by the Russian Duma and Gaidar was removed from his post having accomplished only part of what he envisaged at the outset and with considerable cost to the Russian population. Nevertheless, the well-defined parameters for a radical transformative programme that had been developed in the years preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union enabled a remarkable remaking of the Russian economy in the early years of Yeltsin's rule and ensured that a return to state socialism was an impossibility.

In large part the problems the Bolsheviks faced in attempting to restructure the economy were a product of their own hubris and the theoretical constraints of Marxist analysis. They displayed a disturbing lack of false confidence in their economic prescriptions, bred primarily by the fact that the economy was the *idée fixe* of the Marxist thinkers who dominated the *fin de siècle* intellectual landscape and they felt confidently well-versed in contemporary

economic debates, notwithstanding the marked lack of actual economic experience among the leading Bolsheviks. This misplaced sense of competence was in marked contrast to the nationalities policy where, as we saw in the first paper, the Bolsheviks were much less sure of themselves and willing to countenance flexibility alongside their basic theoretical commitments whilst maintaining a framework that structured the necessary compromises. The second major distinction was the obeisance of the majority of Marxists to the idea of natural laws of economic development that structured arguments in such a way that very few even considered the genuine possibility of communism revolution in a backward agrarian country such as Russia. The Bolsheviks held a similar position until the last moment before the Revolution and this meant that the existing Marxist ideational framework was extremely unhelpful in terms of strategising the transition from the proto-capitalism of late-Imperial Russia to the communist paradise.

Running throughout this paper is the auxiliary point that contemporary economics fails to take account of ideational factors in the analysis of the formulation of economic policy. This methodological and ontological stance has also influenced other fields that study questions relating to economics. As we shall see, even David Harvey, who has authored the most compelling recent account of neoliberalism, focuses more on the political aspects and ignores the economic foundations of this doctrine, impoverishing our understanding of its emergence (Harvey, 2005). We shall also see a further tension between democracy and reform in that Yeltsin ultimately felt unable to continue supporting Gaidar due to the unpopularity of the latter's programme, stunting its full implementation and generating an extremely unpromising halfway house of paused reform that set the stage for the emergence of oligarchs and widespread corruption that would come to characterise the contemporary Russian economy. This continues the subtheme of the dissertation that the severe problems with contemporary democratic theory have an inimical effect on governments seeking to make dramatic, all-encompassing transitions, though we shall largely reserve this point for the conclusion.

This paper proceeds in the following fashion. The first section provides an overview of

recent literature that focuses on economics, suggesting that with few exceptions, the importance of ideational factors is, at best, sidelined. The next section justifies the case selection and provides a brief overview of economic events in Russia leading up to the November Revolution in 1917. The following two sections are the empirical meat of the paper; the first considers the debates among leading socialists and Bolsheviks in the twenty years prior to the November Revolution and how this impacted the chaotic nature of economic policy-making in the years immediately following the Revolution. The second presents an analysis of the main drivers of neoliberalism via the Chicago and Virginia schools and how this influenced Yegor Gaidar and the dramatic reforms of the early 1990s. The final section concludes.

### 3.1 Ideational Factors and Economics

For this paper, we shift to a new realm, that of economics. There is no need to belabour the literature we have already reviewed in the opening two parts of the project concerning general discussions of ideational factors and the problems with making causal claims on this basis, as this has already been covered in some depth. In this section we shall instead discuss the (limited) literature on ideational factors in economics and offer an explanation for why this has been generally overlooked by social scientists (though not by historians<sup>9</sup>). However, the main contribution is to advance our understanding of the role of ideational frameworks by outlining that not all ideational frameworks are equally capable of solving the serious problems of order and sequencing in economic transformation. Both the Bolsheviks and the early post-Soviets were in possession of seemingly well-defined plans for reforming the economic system, but only the latter was to prove of any great help in navigating the immediate period following imperial collapse.

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<sup>9</sup>Daniel Rodgers is one of many authors who has participated in the development of our understanding of intellectual history as it bears on economics in his work examining the relationship between Europe and American and the development of progressivism (Rodgers, 1998). Edmund Wilson's *To The Finland Station* provides an exemplary study of the benefits of intertwining the study of history and economics (with a particular focus on the emergence of socialist thought), though his model has been little adopted (Wilson, 1940).

The relationship between political science and economics is complex, especially given the rise of rational choice analysis and the colonisation of research agendas by econometric tools and game-theoretic models. This has produced some of the most compelling work in the discipline, from Jim Fearon's work on rationalist analyses of war to Jim Robinson and Daron Acemoglu's analysis of regimes, revolutions and economic growth (Fearon, 1995; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006, 2012). Scott Gehlbach *et al.* have tailored some of the fundamental results of political economic analysis to fit the contemporary Russian environment in terms of the prominence of businessmen choosing to expend valuable resources on election campaigns (Gehlbach, Sonin and Zhuravskaya, 2010). There is now an extensive and growing literature seeking to apply these tools of analysis to questions as diverse as calculating the optimal number of nations to analysing the proclivity to ethnic conflict in virtue of minimum-winning coalitions (Alesina and Spolaore, 1997; Bates, 1981). In almost any area of political science, we see the growing influence of economic analysis and economic tools in helping to answer many of the fundamental questions facing the discipline, as well as mainstream economists turning their attention to such topics (Persson and Tabellini, 2000).

All of these are important contributions, but there is a justifiable unease that focusing too rigidly on methods of analysis derived from economics impoverishes our analysis and removes crucial non-material drivers of outcomes from the purview of acceptable topics of study (Mahoney, 2007; Parsons, 2007). This is particularly true when we turn to the primary theme of this paper, namely the ideational drivers behind economic policy in transformational periods. While it is true that a limited number of scholars in political science have recently devoted much of their work to an examination of the politics of ideas behind economic shifts (Blyth, 2002; Darden, 2009), such research programmes remain few and far between. Indeed, Yoi Herrera, in her work on the sources of Russian regionalism was forced to delve into the constructivist literature in international relations due to the absence of compelling frames in the economic literature (Herrera, 2005). My paper is an attempt to contribute to this small but important literature by highlighting the importance of a specific type of ideational

framework in resolving basic problems of transition economics, an area in which technical questions of specification must take a back seat to basic issues concerning the appropriate economic system for the new country.

Before delving further into the complex relationship between frameworks and economic outcomes, we should begin with an brief overview of why economics as a discipline (and, by implication, all subdisciplines parasitic on this, such as political economy) has generally failed to give much credence to non-material factors in explanations of phenomena that clearly seem to touch on objects within its purview. I think there are two primary reasons behind this stance, both of which ultimately stem from the underlying epistemology of the discipline, which we shall discuss in a moment. However, it seems appropriate to begin by noting that this has not always been the case and that modern economics has been marked primarily by a wish to diverge from the other branches of the social sciences and humanities in a fashion that would have been alien to the original practitioners<sup>10</sup>. We shall see that this emerged as a prominent desire of the Chicago School in terms of codifying its major findings in an increasingly esoteric fashion, but the trend can certainly be traced back to the work of Alfred Marshall, who was instrumental in revitalising the study of classical economics using a more robust and technical mathematical language (Marshall, 1961 (1890, 1975).

The first of these is methodological. We shall set aside the regression and data-driven part of economic analysis, since we have already examined the issues relating to ideational factors that result from using these tools in the introductory piece; suffice to say that regressions and ideational factors are strange bedfellows given the difficulty of accurately measuring an idea's influence. However, and perhaps surprisingly for our purposes, economics is in fact well-equipped to deal with abstract features of the social environment. This is because one of the main analytical tools of the discipline, game theory, relies explicitly on the language

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<sup>10</sup>Adam Smith was centrally involved in the Scottish Enlightenment and contributed to a sustained dialogue with David Hume, among others (Marshall, 2000). Similarly, Karl Marx began his academic career as a member of the Young Hegelians and integrated contemporary philosophical debates as part of his economic analysis (Tucker, 2001).

of incentives and utility to calculate equilibrium outcomes, neither of which are inherently measurable but rather theoretical assumptions that help economists structure the environment under study (Binmore, 1990). While this may seem promising, in fact it leads to a dead end in terms of allowing us to make any advances on understanding the value of ideational frameworks for the formulation of economic policy. This is because ever since Paul Samuelson developed the language of revealed preference theory (Samuelson, 1948), game theorists have been largely agnostic about the origins of preferences and have deduced them from consumer actions, with the baseline assumption of rationality guaranteeing this claim. While many have pushed back against this methodological stance (Sen, 1977), it continues to operate as one of the centrally-recognised components of modern economics<sup>11</sup> and is unlikely to change due to severe problems of interpersonal comparability that result from the move away from revealed preference theory<sup>12</sup>. There is a marginal role for ideational factors in game theory in terms of providing information about the origins of preferences or helping to solve problems of multiple equilibria (Henrich, 2000), but this is more of an afterthought than a consistent attempt to look beyond the language of incentives to refine the predictions and results of game theory.

This brings us to the conclusion that ideas are hard to measure and also hard to model, making them largely derivative or unhelpful from the perspective of the orthodox economist. They can function as background conditions or omitted variables in some analyses, but these are hardly acceptable fare for the self-respecting practitioner<sup>13</sup>. This is not particu-

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<sup>11</sup>Ken Binmore has attempted to view social contract theory in terms of games (Binmore, 1998), but this bears strong similarity to Gary Becker's extension of the economic *Weltanschauung* in terms of solving coordination problems. Nevertheless, the extension into political philosophy is a welcome change from the standard uses of game theory and points to the potential for a more promising interaction between economics and the other social sciences. John Rawls implicitly relied on the economic conception of rationality for much of his work in *A Theory of Justice*, suggesting that both sides are aware of the potential benefits to be gleaned from collaboration (Rawls, 1971).

<sup>12</sup>See Elster and Roemer (1991) for a recent discussion of the fraught territory of interpersonal comparisons of utility and why modern economics has retained a very thin version of utilitarianism with much of the moral dimension stripped away.

<sup>13</sup>Elinor Ostrom's award of the Nobel Prize in Economics for her work on the confluence of politics and tragedy of the commons situations, particularly in environmental sectors, suggests there may be some hope



larly surprising and this thought has animated much of the discussion of this project in terms of questioning the potential for conducting standard causal analysis using ideational frameworks. However, this problem is not something that afflicts economics alone; we have already seen that social science as a whole fails to grapple convincingly with non-material factors as potential explanations or factors in policy outcomes for very similar reasons (albeit they are heightened in economics due to technical sophistication and availability of supposedly high-quality data that makes certain types of analyses more attractive).

Perhaps of greater import is the second factor contributing to the neglect of ideational factors, namely that economics is largely a discipline without history<sup>14</sup>, standing aside from the other social sciences in terms of relying on the development of axiomatic postulates to explain phenomena of interest, approximating the research paradigms of Imre Lakatos in a truer sense than any of the sister disciplines (Lakatos, 1970). This generates an increased focus on technical questions of estimation and modelling, building an esoteric approach to the subject matter with high barriers to entry for those unfamiliar with the issues at stake. It also leaves extremely limited time or energy for discussion of the underlying philosophies on which these programmes are constructed or basic normative issues implicated by seemingly technical arguments. This tends to the emergence of an epistemological hegemony that raises economics above other social sciences in the eyes of its practitioners and prevents potentially fruitful cross-collaboration. This is not to say that such research is non-existent; Charles Kindleberger's sociological study of the role and prominence of economists in international organisations provides a fascinating study of the relationship between particular types of organisations and the economists they attract (Kindleberger, 1955). But such pieces are the exception, rather than the rule, especially when authored by a member of the economics profession. Although fascinating, this problem deserves a far deeper treatment than I can

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that this much-needed area of research could yet flourish even under the suspicious eyes of the deans of economics (Ostrom, 1990).

<sup>14</sup>Economic history does exist as a separate research programme, but it stands well outside the mainstream academic discourse of economics and is primarily the province of historians rather than mainstream economists.

offer here since our principal interests lie elsewhere. We shall thus leave it for subsequent research.

This general neglect of ideational factors stands in direct contrast to the theoretical position of this paper (and indeed the entire dissertation), which argues that we cannot understand the formulation of policy in the two periods under study without a firm grasp on the debates that informed the major participants. The focus here, as can be gathered from the introduction, is on the schools of neoliberalism and Marxism and how they informed the policy decisions of the early Bolsheviks and the Gaidar government. We shall see that we cannot make sense of the confusing Bolshevik policies or the post-Soviet radical reforms without a better understanding of the preceding debates in economics among the relevant parties and that a focus on specific material factors is not particularly illuminating with regard to these problems. But first, we must refine further our speculations on the type of ideational frameworks that will be of greatest use in period of crisis.

### **3.1.1 Refining Frameworks**

We have already seen the general contours of the argument relating ideational factors and outcomes in conditions of extreme uncertainty in the introductory chapter and first paper. The opening theoretical chapter proposed the overarching framework for the dissertation, noting that ideational factors are typically underanalysed in political science but that there is some evidence this is slowly beginning to change. The unfortunate dimension of this otherwise welcome shift is that much of the work on the impact of non-material aspects of the socio-political environment has been funnelled through the desire to advance causal arguments, which strips away an important aspect of the value of this strand of research. The central claim that animates the entire project is that possession of a pre-existing framework that helps to organise the tremendous amount of information and lend order to the post-imperial chaos is of incalculable value for ensuring the production of coherent and consistent policy-making in the initial years after the assumption of power by the new forces. As we

have good reason to think that there are strong elements of path dependency that follow from the initial years of policy formation in such formative periods (Blyth, 2002; Pierson, 2004), the cost of a muddling pragmatism may be extremely high and lead to a series of problems that become ever more complex with the passage of time.

The first substantive empirical chapter demonstrated this claim with reference to nation- and state-building (particularly the former) in terms of a comparison of the policies in this area of the Bolsheviks and post-Soviets in the initial years after the collapse of the previous regime. I argued that the influence of the socialist debates in the initial years of the twentieth century (in particular the work of Otto Bauer) exerted a decisive influence on Stalin and Lenin in terms of the formulation of their nationalities policy, providing an essential structuring to the attempt to pacify the volatile North Caucasus region. By way of contrast, the absence of similar debates in the years preceding the Yeltsin period entailed a corresponding architectural lacuna with regard to how nationalities policy should be crafted in the immediate post-Soviet environment, storing significant problems for later (the topic of the final paper). The overall theoretical purpose was to demonstrate the value of an ideational framework in comparison with a broad reliance on pragmatism during the chaotic post-imperial periods, with particular reference to the nature of compromises struck between central and regional actors with regard to state- and nation-building.

The task of this paper is different, since unlike the first case, both the Bolsheviks and the post-Soviet reformers possessed clearly articulated frameworks that seemed to provide sufficiently detailed advice with respect to transforming the economy. The Bolsheviks were able to draw on the decades of debate following Marx concerning the steps needed to shift to a communist system of organisation, while the post-Soviets could draw on the work of neoclassical economists (particularly the work of the Virginia and Chicago schools) in their desire to irrevocably reduce the role of the state in the economy and establish a functional market system from the still-warm ashes of the Soviet experiment. What I seek to develop here is the claim advanced in the introduction that specific forms of frameworks are more

helpful than others; not all frameworks are equal and not all are as well-positioned to help new governments navigate these periods of fundamental uncertainty. The hope is that by the end of this paper, we shall be in a position to understand the value of specific types of framework and how they are likely to originate, leaving the discussion of the legacies for the final paper.

In order to help us do this, we can develop another stylised characterisation of ideational frameworks, this time focused more explicitly on the internal dynamics rather than the brute fact of their existence. We have already seen that one important dimension is the clarity of frameworks, namely the extent to which they provide concrete policy recommendations and provide a basis for shaping the compromises that are inevitable in the post-imperial period. Weak frameworks tend to cause severe problems; Yeltsin arguably had a tepid commitment to some form of democracy, but as we have seen that was not particularly helpful in resolving the central-local conflicts in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse since it provided virtually no concrete guidance on specific matters of policy. The second dimension of interest seems parasitic on the first but is in fact analytically distinct and critical for our analysis in the current paper. This is the degree to which frameworks are able to adapt to the empirical realities on the ground, since it is inevitable that the situation will differ from the theoretical ideal. We saw this work well for the Soviet nationality policy in the early Bolshevik period and we shall also see that neoliberalism was, for all its manifest faults, capable of adjusting to the post-Soviet environment thanks to the brilliance of Yegor Gaidar and his team. By way of contrast, the Bolshevik economic policy was clearly articulated but hopelessly inflexible, generating severe tensions between the leading members of the Bolshevik party and creating a nightmarish situation of unsatisfying compromises and dogmatic insistence on policies that were little short of disastrous and necessitated complete about-faces. We do not have an empirical case of an unclear and inflexible framework in the first two papers, but it is not unreasonable to think that it would be a good fit for a regime driven by personalism or sultanism (Chehabi and Linz, 1998), where the dictator has a poorly articulated

ruling philosophy and yet is unwilling to accept or respond to contradictory information or change seemingly whimsical policies. Stalin and Mao would be reasonable exemplars of this phenomenon and we shall have some cause to return to the former of these in the final paper. Table 3.1 illustrates the relation of these dimensions and the purported results:

Table 3.1: Simplified categorisation of frameworks across two dimensions.

		Flexibility	
		Low	High
Clarity	Low	Unpredictable Insistence	Feckless pragmatism
	High	Blind Dogmatism	Informed Compromise

Having a flexible and clear framework does not necessarily guarantee success in resolving problems of order or economic transformation; these issues are often so severe and wide-ranging that it would be presumptuous and misguided to search for this kind of guaranteed solution. We saw in the first paper that the Bolsheviks struggled mightily with revolts in the Eastern North Caucasus and altered their perspective on the extent to which self-determination was a viable framework for centre-regional relations, particularly with regard to their policy of *raionirovanie*. In this current paper we shall see evidence that Yegor Gaidar’s government was able to achieve only part of what it had hoped in terms of the transformation of the Soviet economy and even that at a slower pace and more inconsistently than was originally desired. Nevertheless, the basic point is that developing and possessing this type of ideational tool kit provides the new governments with the basis for understanding and organising the chaotic elements of the situation and structuring the necessary compromises, thereby maximising the chances of achieving their goals. This, I think, is the best we can hope for and developing our understanding of this particular characteristic can make a major contribution to both the scholarly and policy community in terms of clarifying our understanding of where best to focus energies and resources in unstable

environments.

Conceptualising which frameworks are helpful is only half the battle, however, since it rather begs the question of what drives their development and emergence. In the first paper we saw that the debate between Lenin, Stalin and Otto Bauer was crucial for developing the nationalities policy that would be of crucial importance for defeating the Whites and pacifying large parts of the North Caucasus, notwithstanding the extremely weak Bolshevik presence in the region in the years immediately following the November Revolution. I claimed that sustained debate in the years prior to cataclysmic events helps to sharpen and clarify the frameworks and elucidate specific policies in a manner that was thoroughly absent from the post-Soviet experience given the limited attention devoted to the specifics of how to cope with the fissiparous tendencies of the North Caucasus and the competing and varying demands for sovereignty from the regional republics.

This paper demonstrates that extended debate is not *eo ipso* sufficient, since both the Bolsheviks and the post-Soviets could draw on lengthy discussions concerning economic policies; the Bolsheviks participated in and benefited from the debates surrounding the Second International, with Bernstein, Kautsky and Luxemburg particularly prominent. For the post-Soviets, the neoclassical debates were critical, in particular the differing critiques of Keynesianism (and thus, governmental intervention in the economy) offered by the Chicago and Virginia schools and the associated proposals to minimise the state role in the economic as much as possible in terms of providing both an intellectual underpinning and specific policy advice. Both sides could draw on well-articulated frameworks to inform their policies and yet, as I have claimed above, we see markedly different outcomes and successes, with the Bolsheviks bedevilled by failed and internally contradictory policies while the post-Soviets were able to implement the outlines of a coherent programme of macroeconomic stabilisation and privatisation before becoming overwhelmed by the extent of popular discontent and an obstreperous parliament. This variation in initial outcomes suggests that we need to specify a second factor to facilitate our explanation and bolster our theory of the importance of

frameworks.

The added insight provided by this paper is captured in Table 3.1 by the ‘flexibility’ dimension, which has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs and needs no further elaboration at this juncture. The issue of how flexibility is fostered by the debates without sacrificing clarity is real, however, and not one that we can easily sidestep. To be more specific, why was it the case that the Bolsheviks were entrapped by the legacy of unproductive preceding debates that devoted little attention to the unique problems of socialist transformation in an underindustrialised, rural country while the post-Soviets were able to alter the neoclassical framework to fit the realities of their environment?

My argument in this paper is that the Bolsheviks were themselves taken by surprise by the collapse of the Russian Empire and the November Revolution, meaning that they were largely reliant on pre-existing and wholly unsuitable models for economic transformation that had been designed with a completely different scenario in mind. This general failure on their part to foresee the development of events in Russia, combined with Lenin’s tactical decision to cast out the Mensheviks who had a more realistic conception of how to achieve economic shifts in Russia, entailed that a dogmatic reliance on wholly utopian schemes that were completely unsuited to the realities. The further twist is that it was the very theoretical postulates that created such problems with economic transformation that made the Bolsheviks blind to the political and social problems in Russia because of the stipulations concerning the ‘laws’ of economic and social development that were embedded in orthodox Marxism, particularly through the work of Karl Kautsky. Rosa Luxemburg presented a more promising perspective, but theoretical disagreements between her and Lenin in the aftermath of the revolution, combined with the abstract nature of her thinking, meant that this option faced ultimately insurmountable obstacles to its realisation and may not have been much help regardless.

The central lesson is that the leading members of the Bolsheviks developed and attempted to implement a framework that was completely suited to the task at hand, reflecting the

general inflexibility of orthodox Marxism. Although it produced relatively clear advice in terms of how to launch the socialist transition, this was not tailored to the specifics of the Russian experience and the Bolsheviks were unprepared, unwilling and unable to make the necessary changes in large part because the essence of this particular framework was its very rigidity and relative imperviousness to specific historical events. This contrasts directly with the ideational framework that was developed for nation- and state-building that was markedly less strict in terms of its application and allowed Stalin to focus on how to adapt Bauer's work to the Russian case.

By way of contrast, the slow toppling of the Soviet Empire entailed that there was a long and fruitful discussion of how to resolve the pressing economic issues prior to its ultimate collapse in 1991. The '500-Day' plan, authored by Gregory Yavlinskii and Stanislav Shatalin in 1990 provided a softer version of economic reform under Gorbachev with the gradual introduction of market mechanisms to correct the worst problems of central organisation but was ultimately rejected by Gorbachev himself as being too radical and untimely given the rising discontent from within the Party (Brown, 2007). Nevertheless, this was symptomatic of a general trend among leading Russian economists, of whom Yegor Gaidar was an extremely prominent member, to think carefully and deeply about the necessary changes to the economic system that would address to deep-seated problems inherent in the late-Soviet system. Furthermore, by 1991 the transition governments in Eastern Europe had already embarked on radical restructurings of their economies, providing valuable evidence and important models for Gaidar and his team to study and partially emulate. The size and centrality of Russia guaranteed that it would have to follow a different path, but the combination of years of preparation and hard empirical facts provided an excellent foundation for Gaidar and his team to tailor the transformation strategy to the realities of the situation in Russia and convince a somewhat sceptical Yeltsin of the value of their reform strategy.

While the neoclassical framework developed by Western economists is often criticised for being inflexible (especially in the guise of the 'Washington Consensus') (D'Arista, 2002-3),



the extended discussion and ability of Gaidar and his team entailed that they were able to decide on what they believed to be the best sequencing for the new country. In particular they sought to achieve two goals simultaneously while recognising from the outset the tension between them, namely attempting to balance irreversibility with minimising the social cost of the radical programme of ‘shock therapy’. While there is little doubt that they didn’t achieve all they set out to do and that large sectors of the Russian population suffered greatly during the initial years, the understanding of transformation economics they inherited and adjusted ensured that a coherent path was established. The most prominent example of this is the decision to prioritise privatisation over macroeconomic stabilisation; the standard reform framework suggested that the reverse was optimal but Gaidar and his team believed that privatisation would help garner public support for the changes as well as arrest the perverse ‘spontaneous privatisations’ by factory managers that were occurring due to the weak defence of state property rights during the twilight of the Soviet Union.

Having outlined the major theoretical contribution of this paper to the dissertation and situated it in the (sparse) literature, we can now move to a discussion of the empirics of the paper. Again, we pay particular attention to the period some time before the cataclysmic events generating the collapse of empire, both in terms of the debates over the appropriate nature of economic transformation and the economic legacy of the preceding regime, since these strongly condition the policy responses of the new administrators.

## **3.2 Case Selection**

This paper has the same general analytic strategy as the first in the dissertation, drawing a diachronic comparison between the early Soviets and the early post-Soviets. To be more specific, I focus here on the economic policies developed in the years from 1918 to 1926 and from 1991 to 1995, taking into consideration the economic legacies of the preceding period. For gathering information on the ideational frameworks deployed by the new governments in

each period, I go back rather further. The Bolsheviks were strongly influenced (and leading Bolsheviks participated in) debates among the leading socialists from the Second International, lasting from 1889-1916. The New Reformer government, under the leadership of Yegor Gaidar, evinced the pull of the neoclassical or neoliberal school of economics, which I argue had major intellectual debts to the Chicago and Virginia Schools. As we shall see, Gaidar and his team were more successful in moulding the demands of neoliberal reform to the Russian experience and solidifying the emergence of capitalism as compared to the troubled early Soviet swings between continuing the capitalist path to development or pushing for full socialism that resulted from a failure to adapt the preceding theoretical postulates. In large part I ascribe this to the fact that Gaidar and his team had devoted the years preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union to analysing concrete reform strategies rather than engaging in abstract theoretical debates or analyses of utterly different scenarios, as the Bolsheviks chose to do.

The justification and value of using a diachronic comparison of the same country has been sufficiently elucidated in the first paper and there seems to be little benefit from rehashing my reasoning for so doing. The arguments about the ability to control for multiple unmeasurable and slow-moving variables remains in place, as does the general claim concerning the relative comparability of the situations facing the Bolsheviks and post-Soviets on the wresting of power from the decrepit hands of the former imperial masters. While diachronic comparisons of the same country may often be afflicted by the criticism that the first period directly affected the second and there is thus a logical problem of independence, in the case of imperial collapse I think this is less of a concern. This is because the totalising nature of the regime shift lessens the importance of the past, creating periods of what Mark Blyth has termed ‘Knightian uncertainty’, whereby even basic assumptions are called into question (Blyth, 2002). I am not denying that what went before is irrelevant, and indeed I shall spend some time outlining the inheritance of both governments in terms of the state of the economy. But the fact that economic policy making in both periods drew on entirely alien

philosophies and assumed the fundamental bankruptcy of the system that preceded the shift suggests that we can sideline to a large degree these objections.

But that does not absolve us of all responsibility concerning the comparison. In the first paper, we had a geographical focus, the North Caucasus, that provided an organisational heuristic in terms of selecting material. The common histories of the peoples in this region, combined with their parlous treatment by the authorities and low levels of development across almost any indicator, entailed that these cases were underpinned by sufficient similarities to validate the comparison of the two periods. The levels of ethnic diversity also provided a compelling lens and natural variation through which we were able to examine the formulation and implementation of nationalities policies by the two new governments. This proved particularly useful as we sought to understand the nature of compromises arrived at by central authorities in their dealings with localities.

For this paper, we drop the regional focus. This is largely because the critical economic policies during the transitional period are the product of debate between a limited number of powerful individuals, who are often (but not exclusively) members of the central government. I do not claim that there is uniform application of the economic policies decided upon by these central actors; the vicissitudinous nature of regional politics is exacerbated by the chaos of imperial collapse and we have already had ample demonstration in the first paper of the variation between the administrative territories of the North Caucasus to realise that this is an untenable position. Indeed, Yoi Herrera's research has demonstrated just how much variation there was in terms of the implementation of reform in the post-Soviet space between local jurisdictions (Herrera, 2005), while Terry Martin's extensive research on the early Soviet period includes reams of economic data demonstrating similar variation for the earlier period (Martin, 2001). However, for our purposes we shall retain focus on the process by which the main policies were determined, rather than examining the details of their implementation.

Thus, the task for this section is somewhat simpler than in the first paper, since we must

only demonstrate that there is sufficient overlap between the economic conditions facing each set of actors at the start of their respective periods and then defend the time periods chosen. Even though this paper does not engage in formal causal analysis, it must still bow to the basic postulates of comparative analysis in demonstrating that the Bolsheviks and early post-Soviets were facing sufficiently similar situations as to render our analysis of ideational frameworks convincing (Mahoney, 2007; Brady and Collier, 2004). We look at two central determinants of the comparison.

First, we consider the desires of the two governments. We need to show that each had plans that were similarly dramatic in scope in terms of reforming the economy in order to ensure we are assessing the role of ideational factors using an equally demanding criterion. If the Bolsheviks, for example, were only seeking to make minor adjustments while Gaidar's team was aiming for a total overhaul, it would be unsurprising if we found that the ideational framework of the Bolsheviks was more successful in achieving their limited objective<sup>15</sup>. However, this does not apply in our case because leading policymakers in the two periods shared the desire to completely transform the existing economy and remake socio-economic relations in their societies. The Bolsheviks sought to completely overhaul the odd and contradictory form of capitalism that had emerged under the stewardship of Sergei Witte and Pyotr Stolypin and replace it with a pure form of socialism. The post-Soviets, under the aegis of Boris Yeltsin and Yegor Gaidar, had the goal of a similarly radical transformation, dismantling the state-dominated economy of the late-Soviet period in favour of a somewhat wild form of capitalism.

In terms of the material conditions, which is the second factor of relevance, in neither case was there a strong foundation for the radical shift in terms of preparation for such a dramatic overhaul of the economy. The twilight of Imperial Russia was distinguished by a generalised

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<sup>15</sup>This problem is fairly common in political science, where we often seek to judge the success of government policy by looking solely at the stated aims of the government, rather than investigating why and how these aims were formed. Much of the work on state capacity falls into the trap of assuming that strong governments are those able to carry out their express desires, even if these express desires are extremely modest in form.

sense of weakness and the possible first shoots of capitalism, but certainly was some distance from the advanced capitalist state that the Marxists had always assumed they would inherit. Notwithstanding the beliefs of certain Russian Marxists (such as Georgi Plekhanov) that certain features of the Russian system would allow for a shortcut to socialism, the majority of the leading Bolsheviks did not really consider conditions in the country to be ripe for the revolution prior to the events of 1917. Yegor Gaidar and his team of New Reformers likewise inherited an economy largely on its knees, running a huge trade deficit and dominated by a combination of black market traders and state-run enterprises with managers running amok (Kornai, N.d.). This chaotic inheritance presented new governments in either period with a severe challenge; both wanted to achieve complete overhauls of the economic systems yet lacked basic institutions that seemed to be required to accomplish such a shift.

Turning to the specifics of the paper, I realise that the time period may seem somewhat arbitrary in the sense that I draw the analysis of the post-Soviet case to a close before the second presidential election in 1995. The Soviet ending is more natural in the sense that we pause prior to Stalin's consolidation of absolute power (the topic of the final paper). I justify the post-Soviet period by arguing that by that point Gaidar's team had been almost entirely replaced, bringing to an end the attempts to engage in serious and sustained reform of the economy. The loans-for-shares scheme that has been characterised as having set the Russian Federation firmly on the path back to corruption and oligarchy<sup>16</sup> was intimately tied to this election given Yeltsin's poor performance in the first round and by this point a rather different approach to managing and reforming the economy was undertaken by Yeltsin and his team that more closely resembles their approach to state-building<sup>17</sup>.

We can now finally shift our attention to the primary empirical research of the paper, beginning with the Soviet period and concluding with the post-Soviet attempts at radical

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<sup>16</sup>For a recent re-evaluation of the loans-for-shares programme that argues it was not nearly as damaging as has been conventionally argued, see Treisman (2010).

<sup>17</sup>Yeltsin's fire-fighter-in-chief, Viktor Chernomyrdin, who served as his Prime Minister on multiple occasions, characterised the Yeltsin period in general using the terms 'хотели как лучше, но получилось как всегда' ('we hoped for the best but it turned out like it always does').

market reform. Because there is so much potential material available in answering these questions (far more than was the case for state-building), in what follows I have tried to be selective and include only the most relevant thinkers and information that bears directly on the central issue of the formulation of policy.

### 3.3 Marxist debates: False Confidence and Misdiagnoses

We have already mentioned that the situation facing the Bolsheviks with regard to economic policy differed markedly from that of state- and nation-building that we explored in the first paper. In the latter case, the issue of nationality policy and the role of the state was largely ignored by leading Marxists prior to the November Revolution, with Otto Bauer providing the primary exception in terms of lending important structure to Lenin and Stalin's thinking on the matter. This provided Lenin and Stalin with intellectual freedom of movement to tailor these nascent theories to the reality of the Russian experience and while the fit remained inexact, the framework they developed enabled them to ensure there was underlying consistency in their attempts to resolve the problems of the North Caucasus. With regard to economics, the situation is dramatically different. The centrality of the subject to the Marxist *Weltanschauung* guaranteed that all the major thinkers of this school had much to say on the topic, studying questions of transition and collapse in great detail. While we may think that this extended and extensive debate would have provided a wealth of material on which the Bolsheviks could draw, the impact was in fact largely detrimental, since the focus of the vast majority of the analysis was on transforming an advanced capitalist state into a socialist paradise. Notwithstanding the evident discrepancies between the realities of the Russian situation and the hypothesised scenario, the leading Bolsheviks were drawn into these speculations and concentrated much of their intellectual energy on contributing to these debates, rather than examining the state of play in their country. In part this was

because until the fateful days of 1917, most of them were in exile abroad<sup>18</sup>, but it also reflects the dialectical nature of Marxist ontology, which did not lend itself to bending the iron laws of development.

The upshot of these economic debates was that the Bolsheviks were extremely ill-prepared to deal with the realities of the farcical state of the Russian economy in 1917. They were far from alone in this and there is certainly a grain of truth in Alec Nove's statement that 'practical problems of operating a socialist economy...were not seriously discussed by Marxists...before 1917' (Nove, 1977, 17). While the specific operational issues may have been largely sidelined, major figures in the movement devoted time and energy to the transformation from capitalism to socialism and developed a framework that would have proven to be of greater use if the socialists had inherited an advanced industrial economy at the apogee of capitalism. However, there were two specific problems facing the Bolsheviks given the economic situation of Imperial Russia from the late nineteenth century on. These should have merited far more attention than they received and this failure to pay them sufficient heed would ultimately doom the economic policy of the Bolsheviks to a series of reversals and awkward compromises in the initial years after the revolution that could have been minimised if a more flexible framework had been developed.

The first of these was the problem of the peasantry. Marx and Engels largely dismissed the peasantry as a backward class with no genuine historical role to play once feudalism had subsided (Marx, 1939); in the modern world it offered only a potentially retarding influence that would be eliminated by industrialisation and the growth of the urban proletariat. In Russia this was to prove a far from accurate diagnosis of the situation simply not the case and the peasantry would play a serious role in both the 1905 Revolution and the more final version in November 1917 (Moore, 1966; Skocpol, 1979). The dependence of the major urban centres on the peasantry and the legacy of the failed reforms to privatise the land represented

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<sup>18</sup>Stalin would continually press his claims to be included among the leading Bolsheviks on the basis that he was on the ground in the Caucasus and Petrograd while many leading Bolsheviks were enjoying the relatively comfortable life of European exiles (Service, 2005).

perhaps the most serious challenge to the Bolsheviks and they were completely unprepared for this due to the general absence of this class from the theoretical debates. As we shall see, Lenin did mention the peasantry in his writings, but his analysis was problematic, somewhat cursory and deeply flawed. Georgi Plekhanov gave greater prominence to the potential independent role of the rural communities in his early work, but this was subsequently replaced by a thoroughgoing orthodox Marxism that replaced his initial position with a less helpful perspective. Finally, Nikolai Bukharin arrived at a more promising media via in terms of promoting a more gradual transformation of the countryside, but only after having been a staunch advocate for radical measures that obliterated what little support the Bolsheviks enjoyed in the countryside.

The second was the vague understanding of the necessary role of currency and financial systems, especially in a country with parlous levels of private capital investment and the state thus playing a major role in driving economic progress. This reflected a general unease among leading Marxists concerning the close connections between financial capital and the higher stages of capitalism, a connection highlighted in Lenin's *Imperialism* (Lenin, 1920), among other works during the pre-revolutionary period. Many Marxists, with Bukharin chief among them, pressed for the immediate destruction of the financial system during the revolutionary period, a step effectively taken in the early stages of the Russian Revolution, but this proved entirely unworkable and created a series of increasing difficulties and eventual reversions to a new system (the New Economic Policy). The chaos created an unfavourable precedent and sacrificed further sources of support for the new government. Ultimately this was further illustration, if more were needed, that the theoretically utopian schemes of leading Marxists were entirely impracticable in a country whose development had been predicated almost entirely on state-led investment (Gerschenkron, 1962).

To set the theoretical stage for the Bolshevik debates, we must quickly consider the period dating back a number of years prior to the November Revolution. Leszek Kołakowski argues that the period of the Second International (1889-1914) was Marxism's 'golden age': 'Marxist



doctrine had been clearly enough defined to constitute a recognizable school of thought, but it was not so rigidly codified...to rule out discussion or the advocacy of rival solutions to theoretical and tactical problems' (Kołakowski, 1978, 1). We look at two of the central figures, Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg, since they provide contrasting perspectives on historical processes but ultimately are of marginal help when thinking through the specifics of the problems of the countryside. For work on financial capital, we stray a little farther from centre stage and draw on the work of Rudolf Hilferding, who presented the most considered take on this topic and was highly influential for both Lenin and Bukharin when they came to formulate their own ideas on this issue. When we address the specific works of the major Russian contributors, we shall focus on Vladimir Lenin, Nikolai Bukharin and Georgi Plekhanov<sup>19</sup>. There were a number of minor authors whose influence waxed and waned, but many of these were taking positions effectively derivative on these major thinkers or had little influence on the Bolsheviks and there seems little benefit to casting too wide a net for our purposes here.

Karl Kautsky was, as described Kołakowski, the proponent of 'German orthodoxy' (Kołakowski, 1978), meaning that he attempted to maintain the foundations of Marx and Engels' economic analysis and was extremely critical of Bernstein's attempts to remove the dialectic and revolutionary element of Marxism. He cast perhaps the largest shadow over the Bolsheviks and Lenin was a strong defender of Kautsky in the pre-revolutionary years, turning against him only when Kautsky expressed his lack of support for the Revolution due to the unripeness of Russia, the split between the Russian socialist parties and the rejection of democracy<sup>20</sup> by the Bolsheviks (Kautsky, 1964). We could delve into Kautsky's thought in depth, but that is largely unnecessary for our purposes since his main contribution, befitting his orthodoxy, was to press for the appropriate stages of historical development before launching a

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<sup>19</sup>Stalin, who played such an important role in the development of the Soviet nationality policy, had not such prominence in economic policy and is largely a second-rate theorist in this field. We shall return to his contribution in the third paper when we consider the legacy of the Bolshevik problems with economy.

<sup>20</sup>For Kautsky, the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat would be one characterised by radical democracy, not tyranny.

socialist revolution; Kołakowski draws our attention to Kautsky's ontology that assumed the presence of 'natural necessity' of social processes (Kołakowski, 1978, 36). For this reason, Kautsky was insistent that revolution could and should only be attempted when the proletariat have achieved a sufficient level of class consciousness and he explicitly excludes the 'small peasants' from these ranks (Kautsky, 1964, 14).

This evidently created a serious problem for Lenin and the Bolsheviks, since it entailed that the appropriate course (on this orthodox reading) was to wait until Russia has reached the appropriate stage of political, economic and social development before launching the revolution. This was exacerbated by the fact that many Bolsheviks subscribed to this belief, often until the eve of the November Revolution. The economic policies that derived from this perspective were evidently tailored to an advanced industrial superpower, focusing on implementing workplace democracy and placing the tiller of the ship of industry in the hands of the proletariat rather than tasks more suited to the underindustrialised, predominantly rural case of the fallen Russian Empire.

Rosa Luxemburg was a second strident critic of Eduard Bernstein's revisionist take on Marxism, but she was situated to the left of Kautsky in terms of her belief in the transformative power of revolutions to overcome historical barriers and thus, in theory, provided a firmer foundation for the Bolsheviks. She argued strongly that because the goal of social revolution was the defining characteristic of socialism and critical in separating it from bourgeois democracy, renouncing this explicit goal was tantamount to relinquishing that which was of any theoretical or practical value (Luxemburg, 2004*d*). However, if we read Luxemburg carefully, we see that she does hew to the classic Marxist line that the time is not always ripe for a socialist revolution, since the latter 'presupposes...a definite degree of maturity of economic and political relations' (Luxemburg, 2004*d*, 158); conditions which were most definitely not present in Russia in 1917. In fact, she explicitly criticises Blanquist minority coups, which she characterises as 'bursting out at any minute like a pistol shot, and for this very reason, always inopportune' (Luxemburg, 2004*d*, 158), a seemingly entirely accurate

description of the work of the Bolsheviks. She clarified this further in her analysis of the Revolution of 1905 in Russia, writing: ‘Before absolutism can, and may be, overthrown, the bourgeois Russia must be formed in its interior’ (Luxemburg, 2004*a*, 182).

In a later piece we see the extent of confusion over Russia among European socialists. For having suggested above that there are severe problems with subverting the standard order of Marxist development, she then argues that the events of 1905 reflect ‘the high development of capitalism, modern industry and commerce in Russia’ even though (as she recognises) the bourgeoisie is barely extant in the country at this time (Luxemburg, 2004*e*, 224). So Russia presents a curious paradox, on Luxemburg’s reading, of a proletariat driving a bourgeois revolution in order to ultimately achieve proletarian rule. This ultimately plays out in her criticism of Lenin’s conception of democratic centralism since, Luxemburg argues, ‘the necessary conditions for it could not yet be said to exist in full measure in Russia at the present time’ due to the limited political schooling of the Russian proletariat (Luxemburg, 2004*b*, 253). In her consideration of the Russian revolution, written in the immediate aftermath but published only posthumously in 1922, Luxemburg caustically upbraids Kautsky for believing that no socialist revolution could take place in Russia. However, while she evinces admiration for the perspicacity of Trotsky and Lenin, she is extremely critical of the decision to allow the peasants to seize the estate of the aristocracy, seeing this as merely the transfer of private property from one hand to another, rather than the instantiation of communal property (Luxemburg, 2004*c*, 292)<sup>21</sup>.

Neither Kautsky nor Luxemburg were much help in terms of strategising how to overcome the extremely problematic legacy of the Emancipation of the Serfs, to which we shall turn in our empirical section. With regard to finance, the work of Rudolf Hilferding is similarly problematic, since it was similarly aimed at a highly industrialised country at the highest stage of capitalism. Hilferding was an Austrian socialist whose most famous contribution to

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<sup>21</sup>She was also harshly critical of the Bolsheviks for demurring on the question of socialist democracy, as Luxemburg saw this as intertwined with the seizure of power by the proletariat: ‘It is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat’ (Luxemburg, 2004*c*, 308).

Marxism, *Finance Capital*, was published in 1910. This work took Marx's theory far beyond the superficial analysis of money and finance offered in *Capital* and lays the foundation for Lenin and Bukharin's theoretical work on imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism (Bottomore, 1981).

Hilferding's basic perspective is that the demands of capitalism drive leading industrialists to seek new markets and new bases of production, a process made far simpler by the internationalisation of capital standards and the competition between locales for this investment (Hilferding, 1981, 317). The export of capital by rich industrialists to poor countries brings into being a proletariat class through 'forced expropriation', often with the active help of the state in a given country (Hilferding, 1981, 319). The best of all outcomes is for the state in which the industry is based to take control of the locale, which explains the tight link between the export of capital and imperialism and also drives tension between the imperialist nations (Hilferding, 1981, 329). Ultimately, Hilferding notes, '[f]inance capital does not want freedom, but dominion' (Hilferding, 1981, 334), replacing the bourgeois ideology of democratic peace with the capitalist demand for avaricious aggression towards others. It is only when we realise that the logic of financial imperialism extends to the domestic front that we see why this became so problematic for Lenin and Bukharin; just as any added cost to the expansion of finance capital abroad should be minimised, preferably using the state, so the same applies to the domestic sphere, where the major cost to capital is labour and therefore the proletariat. Thus, the fundamental question illuminated by finance capital is that 'of a struggle for power waged by the working class against the organized power of the bourgeoisie, the state' (Hilferding, 1981, 355). While Hilferding does not take it to this extreme, one potential way to cut this Gordian knot is to thoroughly emasculate finance capital in order to free the proletariat from its demands and this is broadly what Bukharin recommends before realising that the steps required for this are so disastrous that they threaten the entire edifice of Bolshevik power.

It is clear from the works of these prominent socialist thinkers that Russia was, for

the most part, far from their minds until the tumultuous events of 1917, at which point both Luxemburg and Kautsky were highly critical of the conduct of the Bolsheviks (albeit for different reasons). Hilferding mentions Russia, but only as a potential threat to the rising Germany that is the shadow empirical case for much of his book. The economic analysis and efforts of these thinkers were primarily devoted to considering the transition from an advanced economy to socialism, in accordance with the laws of economic development outlined by Marx and Engels, or of developing a softer alternative in the case of Bernstein. As we turn to the work of prominent Russian socialists, we shall see that they also paid fealty to the tenets of this analysis, limiting their preparedness for conducting the transformation in Russia.

### **3.3.1 Russian Socialists**

While considering the work of Kautsky, Luxemburg and Hilferding is instructive in terms of setting the overarching context in which the major Russian thinkers were situated, it can only take us part of the way to understanding the flawed economic programme enacted in the immediate years following the Bolshevik seizure of power. For this we turn to three Russian socialists who represent the spectrum of opinions but ultimately demonstrate the same fatalism concerning the course of historical events that would prove so damaging for the conduct and formulation of economic policy. We begin with Georgi Plekhanov, who was largely responsible for introducing Marxism to Russia, then move to consider two of the more central thinkers for our purpose, Vladimir Lenin and Nikolai Bukharin. Bukharin is perhaps the ideal figure for this specific paper because the shifts in his thought encapsulate the general trajectory of the Bolsheviks and illustrate the uncertainty and damaging reversions that characterised their policy making, as he shifted from one of the most radical voices on the left of the party clamouring for the destruction of the financial system and expropriation of the peasantry to become the staunchest defender of the rightist New Economic Policy in the space of just four years.

Georgi Plekhanov, widely credited as the father of Russian Marxism, stood well to the right of the Bolsheviks by the time of the 1917 Revolution and was thus sidelined in subsequent debates, although his passing in May of 1918 entailed his practical influence would have been inevitably rather limited (Baron, 1995). However, Plekhanov's thought is fascinating because it represents a curious evolution, one that would take him away from the actual current of events in Russia and demonstrate just how pernicious the Marxist ideational frame could be in terms of exerting influence over thinkers and revolutionaries who would otherwise be well situated to assess the conditions on the ground and tailor their tactics and reforms accordingly. The young Plekhanov had an astute understanding of the peasant problem in Imperial Russia and was actively engaged in attempting to foment revolution in the countryside as a precursor to widespread social change in the late 1870s and early 1880s (Baron, 1954). Thus, in an early piece from 1879, Plekhanov challenges directly those who assume that there is one path of historical development and that Russia must therefore follow the European states before it can transition to socialism (Plekhanov, 1905); this represents a clear break with established Marxism and differs markedly from the abstract nature of the discussions among the leading European intellectuals we saw outlined above<sup>22</sup>.

Baron convincingly notes that Plekhanov was forced to abandon his theoretical position regarding the peasantry following the publication of a book showing the irreversible decline of the commune and this, in combination with his European sojourn from 1880 until 1917, solidified his conversion to a more orthodox Marxist perspective (Baron, 1954). By mid-1880 Plekhanov was already evincing that he was no longer committed to the position that Russia's historical path would vary from that of any other country, and he arrived at his final position that the country's ultimate trajectory must pass through capitalist development. Furthermore, he entirely dropped his focus on the historical role of the peasantry, arriving at the far more orthodox (and damaging) position that the peasantry were largely irrelevant

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<sup>22</sup>Baron justly suggests the strong influence of an earlier Russian anarcho-socialist on Plekhanov's thinking at this stage, Mikhail Bakunin (Baron, 1954).

for the purposes of this development (Kolakowski, 1978). Plekhanov lays out his conception of scientific socialism in contradistinction to the narodist and anarchist tendencies he sees as both dominant in Russia and hopelessly utopian and in two works, from 1883 and 1885, he illustrates his transition from his earlier position to a more orthodox Marxism (Plekhanov, 1974*b,a*). In the first piece, *Socialism and the Political Struggle*, he even criticises the positions he had held a few years before, describing the notion of Russian exceptionalism as a ‘fiction’ that was founded on ‘extremely widespread ignorance...of the economic history of the West’ (Plekhanov, 1974*b*, 64). This position placed Plekhanov closer to Marxist orthodoxy and allowed for the continuing profusion of these doctrinal disputes into Russian socialist discourse, but the cost was extremely high in terms of blunting the appreciation of the unusual situation of Russia.

To be more specific, Plekhanov’s lucid and compelling explication of the Marxists to a Russian audience was tremendously influential, integrating Marxist thought with the preceding strands of narodism and populism that had characterised socialist discourse in the country to that point. The cost of so doing was, however, considerable, for it introduced an orthodoxy and rigid structure on debates that had previously been directed explicitly to addressing the particular problems facing the growth of socialism in Russia. Plekhanov’s theoretical shift on the question of the peasantry is most instructive, dropping his belief in the potential revolutionary power of the countryside and replacing it with the standard slogans concerning the power of the proletariat. His work would influence the work of both Lenin and Bukharin, ensuring that the leading Bolsheviks were desperately ill-prepared to deal with the peasant question upon the seizure of power in November 1917.

We can see how this plays out in much of the early work of Vladimir Lenin, which is the most informative in terms of Lenin’s writings on the peasantry. Given that Lenin has already featured prominently in the first paper and is of sufficient notoriety, no biographical sketch seems to be needed here. Notwithstanding some familiarity with the complexity of the rural situation, Lenin clearly relied on orthodox formulations that ultimately lead to

him denigrating the potential role of the rural communities in driving social change. His reductionist division of the peasantry into two classes dramatically simplified the actual situation in the countryside and was seriously damaging for the Bolsheviks' understanding and theoretical positioning on this vital question. This will, as we shall see, prove extremely costly given the dependence of the central government on the countryside in the initial years of Bolshevik rule as the policies antagonised this critical group without demonstrating that Bolshevik rule would resolve any of the fundamental problems facing it.

In one of the earliest-known of his written works, Lenin evinces knowledge of the complexity of the peasant situation in Russia by summarising in depth a recent report on conditions in southern Russia, but he is also already seeking to divide the peasantry into Marxist classes, which was empirically problematic given the scarcity of supposedly 'bourgeois' peasants. Reviewing Postnikov's description of farming, Lenin argues that 'a study of peasant farming...is quite impossible unless the peasants are divided into groups', where these groups are basically classes, with penurious peasants one end of the scale and exploitative peasants on the other (Lenin, 1960*e*, 69)<sup>23</sup>. Drawing on this analysis, as early as 1893, Lenin argues that the emergence of monopolistic trends combined with the spreading impoverishment of the handicraftsmen entailed that 'capitalism is already the main background of the economic life of Russia' (Lenin, 1960*f*). However, it is clear that Lenin is not concerned with protecting the life of the artisans and peasants who are suffering as a result of the shift (at least in the sense that such protection would involve a defence of the existing order); it is precisely this maudlin sentimentality for past times and attempt to prevent the emergence of the exploitative bourgeoisie that he sees to be at the root of Narodism (Lenin, 1960*c*)<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup>In a later analysis in his *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Lenin explicitly argues that the peasantry is divided into a rural proletariat and a peasant bourgeoisie (Lenin, 1960*b*, 113), although there is an unstable *mittel peasant* that is buffeted between these, owning land but not employing proletariat labour and precariously situated with regard to material well-being. He estimates that the petty bourgeois among the peasantry constitute around 20% of the peasant population but occupy a dominant role in production, being the 'masters' of the countryside' (Lenin, 1960*b*, 177). Orlando Figes argues that this is 'pure fantasy' and that as of 1917, only around 2% of the peasantry could credibly be classified as employing wage labour (Figes, 1996, 617).

<sup>24</sup>Lenin was not against reforms that ameliorated the well-being of the downtrodden classes, but he saw



Moreover, Lenin was evidently not hopeful concerning the revolutionary potential of the rural communities<sup>25</sup>, notwithstanding his positing of the dual-class structure of agrarian life. Addressing his fellow Social Democrats at the end of 1897, he describes the rural labourers as part of the ‘backward strata of the proletariat’ and argues that it is not yet appropriate to begin agitating these workers because priority must be given to the urban centres<sup>26</sup> (Lenin, 1960*h*, 330). Nor does Lenin advocate for the preservation of the *mir* at this juncture<sup>27</sup>, seeing this as a core feature of the Narodism that he ridicules<sup>28</sup>. Indeed, he writes that ‘the Russian community peasantry are not antagonists of capitalism, but...its deepest and most durable foundation’, though he also recognises that the element of traditionalism in agriculture entails that capitalism is slower to blossom in such communities (Lenin, 1960*b*, 173). He clarified his thinking in outlining the agrarian programme of the Russian Social Democrats, written and published in the year 1902 (Lenin, 1961*a*). Here we see the extent to which the peasantry represents such a difficult problem for Lenin and his compatriots; Lenin argues that ‘in present day society the peasantry of course no longer constitutes an integral class’ because it will divide into rural proletariat and bourgeoisie (Lenin, 1961*a*, 115). As such, the Social Democrats have no interest in defending the independent interests<sup>29</sup> of the

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these as a means to an end, the end being ‘to speed up the development of this [capitalist] system and, consequently, its downfall’ (Lenin, 1960*c*, 370). In the disagreement between Bernstein and Luxemburg, then, Lenin is clearly on the side of the latter.

<sup>25</sup>A point with which Stalin was in complete agreement. Writing in Georgian in 1901, he notes that notwithstanding the suffering of the peasantry, it ‘is still downtrodden by age-long slavery, poverty and ignorance’ (Stalin, 1952, 21), meaning that the proletariat are the only option for forcing the hand of the tsarist regime.

<sup>26</sup>Plekhanov began his revolutionary career by attempting to stir up revolutionary sentiments among the peasantry and enjoyed considerable initial success, but he soon dropped this in favour of urban mobilisation (Baron, 1954).

<sup>27</sup>Lenin’s position on this was seriously complicated at the turn of the century, for he also argues that the Social Democrats should uphold the commune ‘as a democratic organisation of local government’ (Lenin, 1961*a*, 146). However, they should push for the annulment of the principle of collective liability in order to grant greater freedom to the individual members of the commune and thus foment capitalism. He clarifies this in his appeal to the rural poor from the Social Democrats, arguing that the *mir* should be replaced by a voluntary association that can help the poor to fight the rich (Lenin, 1961*b*).

<sup>28</sup>‘The Narodnik is stubbornly determined to believe in a non-existent non-capitalist development which is a figment of his imagination’ (Lenin, 1960*d*, 519).

<sup>29</sup>Lenin allowed that those interests of the peasantry that would help foment the formation and strength-

peasantry, but only the nascent rural proletariat.

At the turn of the century, Lenin was a strong intellectual ally of Kautsky, defending him against criticism of his analysis of the development of agriculture and siding with him against Bernstein regarding the debates over the materialist conception of history and the appropriate theory of value (Lenin, 1960*a,g*). He continued to adhere to Kautsky's views after the 1905 Revolution, agreeing that the primary task facing the Russian Social Democrats is 'not that of effecting the socialist revolution but that of removing the political obstacles to the development of the existing, capitalist, mode of production' (Lenin, 1962*b*, 232). Note here that Lenin emphasises the fact that the primary obstacles to capitalist development are *political*, not economic at this stage of Russian development, which explains the enthusiasm for democratic reforms displayed by Lenin at this juncture. We find further evidence for this in another piece from 1905, where Lenin states that the full abolition of private property (the ultimate goal of the Social Democrats) cannot be achieved without 'a very high development of the productive forces of capitalism' but that this is 'inconceivable without complete political freedom' (Lenin, 1962*a*, 511). The role of the proletariat is to embolden the bourgeoisie to seek political freedom, but the countryside at this juncture is relegated to an irrelevance and this was the position he would broadly hold until the Revolution in 1917, especially given that he would be in exile from 1907-1917, spending his time in Western Europe and distanced from the situation in his native land.

With that, we turn to Nikolai Bukharin. Bukharin was an extraordinary figure in early Bolshevik history, flitting from the far left to the far right in the space of a few years following the November Revolution. As suggested above, Bukharin encapsulates the problems the Bolsheviks faced in the realm of economic policy and the relationship with Marxist thought. He argued initially for policies that would have tested the structure of an advanced industrial polity in terms of the dismemberment of the role of finance and the trampling of the country-

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ening of the rural proletariat, such as the abolition of all remnants of serfdom, were defensible. But he saw these as exceptional cases since they retarded the development of capitalism and were not generally applicable (Lenin, 1961*a*, 134).

side, but that proved completely disastrous in the Russian case. Then he moved to a more moderate perspective that called for a gradual shift away from the rural-based economy and a slow transformation that would allow Russia to continue along the path to capitalism before reaching the socialist heights. By this time, his earlier position had largely undermined the prospects for a peaceful transition and the Russian economy was on its knees by the time the New Economic Policy was inaugurated. Nicholas Kozlov has attempted to defend Bukharin's about-face with regard to the transformation period by arguing that it reflected the changing circumstances and Bukharin's thinking was informed throughout by a commitment that 'the building of socialism entailed an active if problematic role for the peasantry' (Kozlov, 1990, 108). On Kozlov's interpretation, for Bukharin socialism was inevitably a transitory state between capitalism and communism proper, so the specific dynamics were of limited importance; War Communism and NEP were thus 'different phases of the *same process*' (Kozlov, 1990, 117: emphasis Kozlov's). This interpretation may have some truth in it, but it also betrays the extent to which the Bolsheviks lacked a compelling framework for their economic policies in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union.

Unlike Lenin, where we focused primarily on his early writings to gain a flavour of his perspective on the peasantry, for Bukharin we begin by looking at his *Towards a Theory of the Imperialist State*, published in 1915 (Bukharin, 1982b). In this work, Bukharin outlines his theory of imperialism that would exert a strong influence over Lenin; the outlines of this we have already seen in our discussion of Hilferding. Bukharin sees the state in classical Marxist perspective as simply the 'most general organization of the ruling classes, its basic function being to preserve and expand the exploitation of the oppressed classes' (Bukharin, 1982b, 8). As a result, the abolition of classes brings about the abolition of the state and, finally, the abolition of all forms of oppression; 'the society of the future is a society *without* a state organization' (Bukharin, 1982b, 13; emphasis Bukharin's) and the sooner this can be achieved, the better. Bukharin does acknowledge that for the revolution to succeed, the dictatorship of the proletariat needs a transitional state structure, but this should take place

after the proletariat ‘destroys the state organization of the bourgeoisie’ (Bukharin, 1982*b*, 32). This is the major contribution of Bukharin with respect to the problem of finance capital outlined by Hilferding and it bears significant similarity to Lenin’s view (Lenin, 1920). As we shall see, Bukharin’s influence would be significant in the immediate period after the November Revolution as he defended radical tactics that did cause the near-collapse of the bourgeois state machinery and the financial system that it underlaid. This was the implementation of standard Marxist thought on the problem, the issue being that the Russian economy was far more dependent on state investment and support than should have been the case in an advanced capitalist society, meaning that this brought the Bolsheviks near to ruin and necessitated a dramatic shift in policy in order to avoid the complete collapse of the economy.

For Bukharin’s thoughts on the peasantry, we turn to his *General Theory of the Transformation Period* (published in 1920). This book was a full-throated defence of War Communism from the left, excusing the excesses as necessary for the construction of socialism: ‘Capitalism was not built: it built itself. Socialism...is built by the proletariat, as organized collective subject’ (Bukharin, 1971, 68). Bukharin argues that in the transition to socialism, the countryside will lag significantly behind the city due to the dynamics of production in agriculture and the persistence of partial payment in kind, which blunt the worst excesses of capitalism (Bukharin, 1971, 89). Nevertheless, the influence of the city will overcome these retarding elements, notwithstanding peasant resistance and demands for the redistribution of land into private, rather than communal, hands. Moreover, Bukharin suggests that the only means for arriving at a serviceable equilibrium between the city and country is through ‘state coercion’ to drive nationalisation of larger farms and collectivisation of the rest (Bukharin, 1971, 93). Without such a move, the interruption to production will leave the city with nothing to offer the country and therefore the socialist economy will be unable to get off the ground. He also argues that a form of labour conscription (‘universal compulsory labour’) will be necessary in order to resurrect the damaged system of production that is the legacy

of the capitalist collapse (Bukharin, 1971, 111); this, combined with the overall orchestration of the economy, will generate significant technological advances that will revolutionise agriculture and erase the distinction between city and country. We should note the internal contradiction between the state-directed economy required to shift the economic locus of activity from rural to urban centres and the demands Bukharin earlier made to dismantle the bourgeois state; this tension would be writ large in the early Bolshevik years and force a major change of direction. We shall return to Bukharin's ideological gymnastics when we introduce the New Economic Policy but as this was largely an ad-hoc response to events (albeit one conditioned by his Marxist training) it is out of place to introduce it at this juncture as this section has been primarily concerned with establishing the parameters of debate leading up to the 1917 November Revolution and immediate period following.

This effectively sets the stage for the Bolsheviks up to the implementation of War Communism. We see that all three of the major thinkers profiled in this section were strongly influenced by Marxist orthodoxy and did not concern themselves with the specific conditions in Russia or how these would influence the formulation and implementation of these policies. In large part this was because the Marxist ideational framework did not lend itself to geographical adjustment; all countries were following a broadly similar developmental path and all would ultimately progress to socialism once the inevitable revolution took place. We shall see that this was to prove extremely costly, but in order to set the state we must begin with an appreciation of the imperial legacies that Tsar Nicholas II bequeathed to the Bolsheviks<sup>30</sup>.

### 3.3.2 Imperial Legacies

Having examined the plethora of different theoretical positions both within the Bolshevik party and European Marxism/socialism as a whole, we can now move to considering how these impacted the formation of economic policy in the early years of Bolshevik rule. First

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<sup>30</sup>The transitional government of Alexander Kerensky that was in power from February to November 1917 following Nicholas' abdication was too short-lived to accomplish anything substantial in the realm of economics and will thus not feature in this paper.

we should consider the imperial legacy as this exerted a direct bearing on the ability (or otherwise) of the Bolsheviks to implement their preferred vision and it helps us to further understand the extent to which the leading Bolsheviks were unprepared to take the reigns of the economy following the November Revolution. We shall pay particular attention to the role of the state in the economy and the problematic legacy of the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861. Then we shall move to the policies enacted following the revolution, focusing on War Communism and the New Economic Policy as indicative of the theoretical morass into which the Bolsheviks fell following their assumption of power in November 1917.

When Tsar Nicholas II ascended to the imperial throne in 1894, he inherited an empire with a population of 129.4m and covering over eight million square miles (Charques, 1958)<sup>31</sup>. However, this was an empire in serious trouble; a large proportion of this population was peasant and rural and the great reforms of the nineteenth century, in particular the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861, were still working their way through the system<sup>32</sup>. Power in the countryside was held either by the great landowners or the peasant commune (the *mir*), with the condition of the individual peasant ultimately disarmingly similar to the situation prior to 1861, albeit with different masters and a somewhat altered social structure.

Compounding this issue were the restraints on peasant mobility that had been enacted along with the Emancipation. Peasants seeking to leave the *mir* had to have both the approval of the elder of their family and the collective support of the commune (two-thirds majority) (Charques, 1958), a restraint that was in place until Sergei Witte's construction of the Trans-Siberian railway and the drive to resettle peasants from the seriously overcrowded Black Earth region to sparsely settled Siberia (Judge, 1992). As a result, from 1893-1902 over one million peasants relocated (this compared with just over 500,000 for the thirty intervening years between Emancipation and 1893) (Judge, 1992, 77). However, this did

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<sup>31</sup>As a point of reference, the continental United States is just over three and a half million square miles.

<sup>32</sup>The forty-nine year redemption payments owed by the liberated serfs to the former owners of the land were scheduled to end only in 1910 and were based on substantial over-valuations, constituting a major source of rural tension (Charques, 1958). These were finally cancelled in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution as a concession to the peasantry (Fitzpatrick, 1994).

not solve the basic problems of unequal population distribution and severe land shortages, both of which were compounded by massive population growth in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1902 widespread peasant revolts forced the central administration to reconsider the wisdom of perpetuating the extraordinary levels of land shortage, although a severe conflict between Witte and Viacheslav Plehve, the Minister of Interior<sup>33</sup>, prevented a graceful and rapid solution emerging<sup>34</sup> (Judge, 1992).

Witte attempted to advance Russian industrialisation through state-led development, drawing on the German model founded in his admiration of Otto von Bismarck (Wcislo, 2011), with a particular focus on the railways (the Trans-Siberian railway was largely constructed under Witte) and a large increase in foreign capital investment (Barnett, 2004). Witte saw the focus on industrial development and the corresponding shift from agriculture as essential for supporting the legitimacy of the House of the Romanovs<sup>35</sup>. He moved Russia on to the gold standard to encourage foreign investment in August 1897 and oversaw tremendous internal growth, but his decision to route the Trans-Siberian railway through Manchuria rather than remaining in the territory of the Russian Empire was a direct precursor to the Russo-Japanese War that would undo the impregnability of the imperial state that he had worked to support (Wcislo, 2011).

Pyotr Stolypin, who was plucked from relative obscurity as Governor of Saratov to head the Ministry of the Interior in April 1906, was to be the man who resumed Witte's quixotic attempt to provide the tottering edifice of tsarism with the necessary economic stability<sup>36</sup>. He arrived in the capital in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution, facing continuing unrest

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<sup>33</sup>Plehve and Witte were united as to the importance of resettlement in easing problems of order and economic growth, respectively, but Plehve wanted a far greater central oversight of the resettlement process than Witte, who was primarily concerned with helping spur industry.

<sup>34</sup>Their dispute was ended by a combination of Witte losing the post in Minister of Finance, the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, Plehve's assassination in June of that year and, most importantly, the outbreak of the 1905 Revolution.

<sup>35</sup>Wcislo has argued that thanks to Witte's programme of state-led capital infusions, by the start of World War One, the levels of investment had become 'self-sustaining' (Wcislo, 2011, 143).

<sup>36</sup>Witte, a notoriously jealous man, did not look kindly on Stolypin's reforms and believed the latter man was claiming credit for trends that had started under his administration (Wcislo, 2011).

in the Empire, and was immediately swept up in the debates over agrarian reform given the worrying levels of famine plaguing the Russian Empire. The fact that Saratov had experienced more destruction of gentry property in 1905-6 than any other province in the Russian Empire would strongly influence Stolypin's belief in the importance of resolving agrarian problems (Figes, 1996). If the Bolsheviks had taken a similar lesson from the same events and understood fully both the radical potential of the peasantry and the widespread grievances that fuelled this unrest, they could have managed the post-1917 situation with far more sensitivity and élan than would prove to be the case. As we shall see, the reliance on forced collectivisation and state coercion favoured by Bukharin won the day, but had deeply inimical consequences for their future policies.

Stolypin rapidly replaced the feeble Ivan Goremykin as Prime Minister and embarked on a widescale reform of the Russian economy, directing many of his efforts to preventing the causes of dissatisfaction that he saw as driving support for the revolutionaries<sup>37</sup>. His attempts to remake the Imperial countryside were centred on freeing the peasantry from dependence on the peasant commune, an attempt to fully break the shackles that had been at best partially severed by the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861. For Stolypin, restoring order was closely linked to the prosperity of the peasantry, which by implication meant the widespread development of private property<sup>38</sup>. He oversaw a dramatic increase in the amount of land available to peasants, implemented reforms to diminish the social stigmatisation of the peasantry and loosened the hold of the *mir*, but he anticipated having twenty years for his reforms to take effect; they had at best eight before the outbreak of the First World War (Barnett, 2004). Even in this short time period, Ascher suggests that the markedly limited results did not bode well; by 1914 only 20% of peasants enjoyed private ownership of land

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<sup>37</sup>This included concrete steps such as ensuring the effective functioning of the Peasants' Bank and offering some degree of protection to peasants from rapacious landowners (Ascher, 2001). However, he also oversaw the attempts to quell peasant insurrection through less noble means; the nooses used to hang prominent rural revolutionaries were named 'Stolypin's neckties' in commemoration of his perceived oppressive techniques (Figes, 1996, 221).

<sup>38</sup>'Private peasant ownership is a guarantee of order, because each small owner represents the nucleus on which rests the stability of the state' - so wrote Stolypin to Tsar Nicholas II in 1905 (Ascher, 2001, 156).



and the number leaving the commune in 1913 was just 27% of that in 1908 (Ascher, 2001, 164). Figes has suggested that on the basis of this rate of progress, nearly a century would have been required to build the class of agrarian bourgeoisie needed to buttress the system Stolypin envisaged (Figes, 1996, 240). However, Stolypin's assassination in 1911<sup>39</sup> and the outbreak of war in 1914 conclusively brought to an end any hopes that the agrarian problem could be decisively resolved without further major unrest, which arrived in the 1917 double revolutions of February and November, the latter bringing the Bolsheviks to power.

There is much more we could say about the imperial period, but for our purposes it should be clear that the imperial legacy was unpromising from a Marxist perspective, particularly along the lines of the two factors identified above. The state was a driver of industrialisation, with many of Witte's projects continuing until the outbreak of the First World War and not being replaced by private capital. While this may seem on a superficial level to support the perspective of Hilferding and Bukharin that the interests of state and capital are fundamentally interlinked, the orthodox perspective was that capital should be under control of industrialists who dominate the state, rather than the reverse. This distinction would prove of great consequence when Bukharin successfully advocated the evisceration of the financial sector as part of the plan to overthrow the state machinery. The prospects regarding the peasantry were, if anything, less promising. The countryside was still largely unreformed and the peasant grievances largely unaddressed by the time of the fall of the regime, while the agricultural sector was far more prominent for the Russian economy than should have been the case according to Marxist beliefs. This would again result in serious missteps, as we shall see in the next section.

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<sup>39</sup>As Figes has suggested, the fact that Stolypin singularly failed to build a broad base of support or to generate any 'stolypinites' who would be willing to continue his reforms in the absence of their leader suggest that his project was probably doomed given the untenability of his political position in the months before his death (Figes, 1996).

### 3.3.3 From War Communism to the New Economic Policy

We have seen in the first paper that the Bolsheviks were in a rather desperate situation with regard to state- and nation-building in November 1917, with weak control over large parts of the country and systemic problems of order impeding their attempts to implement the nation-building policy that Stalin had outlined in 1913. Turning to the principal topic of this paper, we see that the economic situation was no better. The First World War had brought Imperial Russia to its knees, inflation was spiralling out of control and the Civil War was very much in prospect following the Bolshevik seizure of power. Although the economy of the Russian Empire was the fifth-largest in the world in 1917 (Pipes, 1990, 681), by October of that year only six percent of the currency in circulation was covered by gold reserves (down from 104% in July 1914), suggesting that the Bolsheviks faced a problem of inflationary trends in the currency regardless of their policy (Barnett, 2004, 51). A better grasp of the economic situation of the country might have helped the Bolsheviks secure support in areas where they lacked it, particularly in the countryside, but the determination to press on with radical policies in an attempt to forge a socialist shortcut defeated this possibility. By the point at which the Bolsheviks realised the excesses of War Communism and reverted to the New Economic Policy, a more gradual approach to reform intended to take the country further along the road of capitalist development, it was arguably too late to fix the situation created by the initial excesses. In a strange sense, both policies represented orthodox Marxist procedure in terms of the transformation of a capitalist economy; War Communism and the early policies basically reflected the established doctrine in place for advanced capitalist states, whereas the more gradual New Economic Policy was a sustained effort to help Russia continue along the standard path of development before the advance to full socialism. Neither met with particular success, but the sequencing was disastrous, since the radical measures alienated essential constituencies who were then predisposed to block future Bolshevik efforts.

Returning to our two main themes of interest for the Bolsheviks, we see that neither policy

was particularly successful. With regard to the peasant question, War Communism sharply illustrated the lack of knowledge and failure to grasp the situation of the leading Bolsheviks. We have already seen in the first paper that the low levels of rural support for Bolsheviks in the pre-revolutionary period reflected the fact that they had been comprehensively out-argued on the peasant question by the Social Revolutionaries, who had developed a core base of support in the countryside due to their long record of attempt to resolve the major problems facing the peasantry (Fitzpatrick, 1994). The New Economic Policy represented a realisation that the excesses of the previous policy were doing immense harm to the legitimacy of Bolshevik rule and attempted to arrive at a *modus vivendi* with the countryside, but the damage of forced collectivisation and expropriation of the peasants meant they were little inclined to trust the Bolsheviks. As with Stolypin's reforms, it could have enjoyed greater success over the long run, but was choked off by Stalin's renewed push for collectivisation in the late 1920s; in any case it was probably fatally damaged due to Bukharin's ideological switch. With regard to finance and capital, War Communism represented a push by Bukharin and others on the far left to dismember the existing financial system and replace it with the ideal of a barter economy, though this again largely represented a failure to understand the underlying dynamics and drivers of the Russian economy and was internally contradictory due to the Bolshevik reliance on state power and financing. Again, the New Economic Policy sought to correct this and was more successful than with the peasant question, but not to the extent that it could provide a basis for opposing Stalin.

We should note that there is considerable historical controversy concerning the extent to which War Communism and the New Economic Policy, the two policies that would define this early period of Bolshevik rule, represented the culmination of careful planning or were a hasty reaction to unforeseen events by a party riven by internal schisms. The truth, as is almost always the case with these matters, lies between these two extremes. Richard Pipes represents a strong proponent of the notion that Bolshevik policy making was primarily the product of preconceived plans. He claims that 'Bolshevik economic policies in the first years

of the regime were neither improvisations nor reactions' and argues that throughout the early years of the regime, Bolshevik economic policy was directed at eliminating private property, with laws in 1918 directed at abolishing inheritance, debt and the expropriation of urban landed property (Pipes, 1990, 672). He views War Communism as a major development in this general trajectory and that this was not a response to the exigencies of the Civil War but something that had long been planned and was implemented regardless of the dire economic situation. However, as Pipes recognises, these attempts to abolish property and a monetary system by decree were often not worth the paper on which they were written. Given what we have learned in the first paper, it is unsurprising that the nascent Soviet state was unable to enforce such extraordinary measures as the abolition of the monetary system and replacement by barter (Pipes, 1990). Julie Hessler offers a more moderate version of this claim in her research on the dynamics of trade in early Soviet Russia, arguing that '[c]entralization was the governing principle behind Soviet interventions' (Hessler, 2004, 56). She notes that the Bolsheviks sought to bring all the quasi-bourgeois communes under the supervision of VSNKh (Supreme Council of the National Economy) and stripped away the independence of the communes due to concerns about their fealty and obeisance to Bolshevik power.

Alec Nove, meanwhile, sees War Communism as the result of the parlous economic situation and the lack of coherent forward planning by the Bolsheviks, suggesting that it 'was an amalgam of response to the harsh necessity of civil war and of a naive attempt to leap quickly into socialism' (Nove, 1977, 17). Alan Ball is also an advocate of the position that War Communism was largely a response to the exigencies of the initial situation after seizing power, but that it was easy to fit these emergency measures into a rhetorical frame that emphasised the necessity of a rapid transition to socialism (Ball, 1990). Representing a *media via* is the work of Nicholas Kozlov, who suggests that both of these positions are rather extreme. As we have seen above, there is undeniable evidence that the exigencies of the situation took leading Bolsheviks by surprise and that War Communism was a response

to the extremely troubling economic situation of the immediate post-revolutionary years. Nevertheless, Kozlov suggests that it was integrated into a theoretical narrative after the event, with subsequent developments viewed as evolutions from the starting point of War Communism (Kozlov, 1990). Figes also supports the moderate view, suggesting that viewing War Communism as either purely pragmatic or purely ideologically driven lead to problematic interpretations of the actual facts. He suggests that the purely pragmatic perspective ignores the fact that War Communism was an integral part of the conduct of the Civil War, while the purely ideological school ignores the very real debates over the conduct of economic policy in 1918. Instead, he prefers to view War Communism as ‘a *political* response to the urban crisis of 1918’ (Figes, 1996, 614). We shall delve into the nature of this urban crisis in due course.

War Communism was the policy that was inaugurated in 1918 as soon as the Bolsheviks realised that they would need significant resources to fight the Civil War, though as Pipes notes it was only given this name in 1921 during the shift to the New Economic Policy as part of a post-hoc rhetorical justification for the hardships endured by the population (Pipes, 1990, 671). Tactically speaking, Lenin was in an extremely weak position and forced to accede to Bukharin’s push to radicalise economic policies. This was largely the result of Lenin having accepted peace with Germany to bring the First World War to an end through the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk<sup>40</sup>; Bukharin and the left faction of the Bolsheviks viewed this as an unforgivable compromise and would ultimately go on to form the Left Communists, who would press Lenin for ever-more radical economic policies (Pipes, 1990). The First World War and Civil War were also responsible for a dramatic reduction in the quantity of usable agricultural land (though peasant resistance also contributed); in Kabardino-Balkaria autonomous oblast there was a 50% reduction in the available sowing area in comparison with 1913 and the horse population, absolutely critical given the low level of technological

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<sup>40</sup>Figes reports that this resulted in Russia relinquishing 34% of her population and 32% of her agricultural land; German property was also exempt from nationalisation (Figes, 1996).

advancement (by 1924, when the first tractors appeared in the AO, only 49% of households claimed possession of a horse), had seen a threefold decrease. It was hardly surprising that famine would be rampant in the AO in 1921-1922. (Бербеков, 1958).

By 1920 all banks with the exception of the People's Bank had been liquidated and inflation was rampant due to the issuance of currency with no backing; by October 1919 prices had increased by a factor of 923 in comparison with 1913, and by 1923 the level of price increases had reached an extraordinary 650m%, making the paper roubles effectively worthless (Pipes, 1990, 683). Real wages were at 2% of their 1913 level by 1920 and the average worker's monthly salary was enough to afford merely three days of food. This collapse of the monetary system was seen as a great achievement by the Left Communists, of whom Bukharin was the most prominent, who always viewed the abolition of money as the ultimate aim of the Bolshevik government. However, they were finally and with much regret forced to realise the utopian extent of this wish by the severe problems of settling intra-governmental debts (Pipes, 1990, 688). This systemic collapse also had the problem of facilitating autarky in the countryside, for the villagers had little need to trade with the cities, who had little to offer but worthless paper roubles. This generated a mass emigration to the countryside, exacerbating the issue of underindustrialisation; even those workers who did not choose to move spent many days shuttling between the countryside and city, struggling to survive on the black market and generating an average absenteeism rate of 30% (Figes, 1996).

The response to this spiralling dependence on primitive market relations was to institute War Communism, which effectively banned all trading and introduced state rationing, as well as confiscation of all peasant surplus. In place of trade, a centrally coordinated commodity exchange (*tovaroobmen*) was organised that would provide peasants with supposedly valuable material goods in exchange for food, a step that satisfied neither the peasantry (who preferred the surety of the market price of grain) nor the central planners in the cities, who felt the peasants were duping them (Hessler, 2004). We have seen in the previous section how complex the relationship of the leading Bolsheviks was to the peasantry; War Communism

cut this Gordian knot by casting the peasant as agents of reaction preventing the development and emergence of the socialist economy. An army of 76,000 was assembled to ensure the peasants complied with this order; their general levels of discipline and attention to task were no higher than that of the Red Army recruits, further inflaming the hatred of the peasantry for the Bolsheviks and leading to widespread revolts (Figes, 1996). Lenin's attempts to portray these requisitions as a 'loan' from the peasantry to the state did not help to assuage peasant concerns that their goods were being traded for a song (Hessler, 2004, 74).

However, this was as nothing compared to the trouble that would result from the collectivisation of land, instantiated by the Statute on Socialist Land Organisation in February 1919; by December 1920 there would be over 16,000 collective farms (Figes, 1996). The rising grievances would result in the Peasant Wars of 1921; by this point much of rural Russia was experiencing famine to rival the worst days of tsarism<sup>41</sup> and outbreaks of resistance to the requisitions were widespread across the countryside, from the Don and Kuban to Omsk and Tomsk, paralysing Soviet infrastructure for months at a time (Figes, 1996). Meanwhile in the city, full-scale nationalisation of industry formed the other major component of War Communism. The Bolshevik government had issued a decree in the days immediately following the Revolution granting control of all factories to the workers, although the potential for full-scale decentralisation of control of the means of production was limited by the creation of the VSNKh four days after this decree (Malle, 1985, 47).

The progress of nationalisation of enterprises in the period after the Revolution bore a strong similarity to the deportation of the Cossacks in the North Caucasus and the declaration of sovereignty by various territories in that it progressed haphazardly and with a strong impetus from below, rather than strict oversight from VSNKh (Malle, 1985)<sup>42</sup>. VSNKh

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<sup>41</sup>Figes estimates that in Samara province alone 700,000 people perished by the end of the famine in 1922 (Figes, 1996, 776).

<sup>42</sup>The series of nationalisations of factories and industries by the Terek Sovnarkom in the North Caucasus region in 1918 provides an excellent example of this (Черджи́ев, 1971). We have seen in the first paper that Bolshevik control over this region was effective in name only until the end of the Civil War, meaning that these nationalisations were certainly not within the purview of central authorities.

struggled to impose order on the extent of confiscation of enterprises and in April 1918 decreed that enterprises nationalised without its explicit approval would not be funded from the public purse, a potentially crippling blow (prior to this decree VSNKh or Sovnarkom had been responsible for under a third of nationalisations) (Malle, 1985). One of the countervailing forces to the widespread unemployment was the growth of the bureaucracy, which positively ballooned under the Bolsheviks. Figes estimates that from 1917 to 1921 there was a fourfold increase in the number of government workers, with the figure in 1921 standing at 2.4m, twice the number of workers (Figes, 1996, 688).

Notwithstanding Bukharin's full-throated defence of War Communism, by early 1921 it became extremely evident that this was a ruinous policy and needed urgent emendation. The attempt to railroad the Russian state and economy into a socialist paradise by skipping wholesale critical developmental steps was largely in ruins and there was widespread acknowledgement of the need to shift course. The initial framework that the Bolsheviks had tried to use was manifestly unsuited for the task, having been predicated on a set of circumstances that was completely alien to the material situation in Russia in 1918. It had also contributed to the economic devastation of the two wars, meaning that by 1922 37% of peasant households lacked a draft animal of any kind (Fitzpatrick, 1994, 25), making an increase in the productivity of many farms effectively impossible without serious investment and policy changes. The alternative was the New Economic Policy, which we turn to now.

The New Economic Policy was, in large sense, a recognition that the excesses of War Communism were self-defeating and undermining what little legitimacy the November Revolution enjoyed amongst the majority of the Russian population. Lenin justified this as a return to the project of advancing Russia through the stages of economic development that had been his concern throughout much of the period leading up to the November Revolution. The problem was that many Bolshevik supporters saw this concession as a betrayal, leaving Lenin and the senior Bolsheviks in the unenviable position of either satisfying their core supporters or staunching the haemorrhaging of support by sacrificing them. Perhaps not



surprisingly, they chose the latter course, deciding that the revolution could not persist if it continued to antagonise the peasantry (Ball, 1990). The emergence of the class of Nepmen, those who were most well-positioned to profit from the relaxed regulations governing private enterprise, was not welcomed by the Bolsheviks and, as we shall see in the final paper, provided little-needed ammunition to further Stalin's drive to full-scale collectivisation.

As noted in our earlier discussion of Bukharin, he became one of the loudest defenders of the New Economic Policy, representing a remarkable shift in ideological perspective. In his first major piece justifying the NEP, Bukharin notes that there was a direct contradiction between the expropriation of agricultural surpluses under War Communism and the development of agriculture, but this must now be corrected and in order to advance economic development the priority must be on 'nonproletarian, bourgeois, capitalist forms of economy' (Bukharin, 1982*a*, 104). This was, as Bukharin grudgingly admitted (Bukharin, 1982*a*, 107), a reversion to a form of state capitalism, where the state was playing the major investment role in attempting to develop industries and the countryside, effectively forcing Russia back to the developmental path outlined by Sergei Witte in the late nineteenth century and also effectively accepting Kautsky's criticism of the Russian Revolution for occurring in an untimely fashion.

The initial step for NEP was to promote trade in goods between the state and the peasantry in the spring of 1921, but the paucity of tangible material reserves in Bolshevik hands entailed that private trading rapidly outweighed the planned restrictions and by the end of the year steps were taken by Sovnarkom that would ultimately result in a near-total legalisation of trade and the restoration of many of the hated practises of capitalism (including inheritance) (Ball, 1990). Simultaneously, the Bolsheviks allowed the peasantry to pay taxation in kind rather than in currency and tailored the amount to be paid depending on productivity, which was one of the first sympathetic steps taken towards the countryside since the seizure of power<sup>43</sup> (Ambartsumov, 1977). The State Bank was also reopened in

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<sup>43</sup>Berbekov estimates that this reduced by a factor of three the burdens on the peasantry of Kabardino-

November 1921 and, after an initial period of extremely limited activity due to insufficient reserves, was allowed to print paper money (*chevronets*) for commercial transactions in October 1922 (Zaleski, 1971). These would ultimately replace the hopelessly inflated paper rouble in 1924 with a conversion rate of one *chevronets* to 50 billion paper roubles (Zaleski, 1971).

The legalisation of private property had a dramatic effect on the social structure in rural locations, fortifying the kulaks, or independent farmers, whilst condemning the poorest, who no longer had access to communal tools and were often forced to work as hired help rather than tend their land. Ambartsumov estimates that by 1925 there were more than two million farm labourers in the country (Ambartsumov, 1977, 210). Nevertheless, compared to the deeply unpopular policy of forced collectivisation and requisition under War Communism, this marked a dramatic shift in the relationship of the Bolsheviks to the countryside. While the leading Bolsheviks retained the expectation that the countryside would ultimately be replaced in importance by the ‘commanding heights’ of heavy industry (Ball, 1990), there was a recognition that the path to socialist development would be undergirded by increases in agricultural productivity inculcated by capitalist impulses.

Thus, the NEP did deliver substantial improvements to the quality of life for citizens of Soviet Russia, particularly the class of moderately to well-off farmers, with modernisation and regularisation of farming finally eradicating some of the worst inefficiencies of the agricultural economy and driving a secular increase in the harvest yields throughout the mid-1920s (Figes, 1996), although the serious crop failures in the North Caucasus in 1924 demonstrated that the legacies of War Communism would take significantly more time to unravel than was ultimately allotted (Бербеков, 1958). The problem was that by this point, the earlier actions of the Bolsheviks had so alienated the village that ‘within the village, the Bolsheviks were without real authority’; membership levels were paltry and the slow expansion of basic state

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Balkaria AO (Бербеков, 1958). However, the tax in kind would subsequently be replaced by a money tax and given that there were no equivalent taxes on the urban worker, this continued to breed rural resentment (Fitzpatrick, 1994).

functions meant that many villagers had barely any routine interactions with Soviet power (Figes, 1996, 791). Suspicion of the peasantry had never been eradicated among the leading Bolsheviks and the failure to resolve this basic problem of order would be a crucial contributor to the excesses of Stalinism that we shall examine in the next and final paper. Summarising the results of the Thirteenth Congress of the Bolsheviks in June 1924, Stalin would state that private capital was exerting a decisive hold in retail trade (he estimated 80%) and that, furthermore, '[r]ural credit was...entirely in the hands of the kulak and the usurer' (Stalin, 1953, 255). This discontent with the policy would escalate to its full scale abandonment in subsequent years and replacement with collectivisation.

In comparison with War Communism, there is little doubt that the NEP marked a dramatic improvement. Rates of growth were impressive and even took the central Soviet statistical agencies by surprise in the mid-1920s, with accelerations charted in three consecutive years from 1922 onwards (Davies, 1994, 136). The tensions with the countryside were eased thanks to mollifying policies such as allowing for the payment of taxation in kind and allowing for the sale of goods on the private market, ending the dangerous cycles of peasant revolts that had represented a serious threat to the regime in 1920. The acknowledgement by Lenin and Bukharin of the potentially promising role of capitalism in building socialism chimed with the orthodox Marxist perspective of Kautsky and would have found support from the Mensheviks in 1917, had the Bolsheviks demonstrated any interest in searching (Ball, 1990). However, this was simply not enough to overcome the excesses of War Communism in the eyes of many residents of Russia and, moreover, the doctrinal cost of encouraging capitalism would prove to be extremely high, as it provided Stalin with a platform to cast out Bukharin and the others on the right as part of his return to collectivisation and coercive methods. The basic point, as emphasised above, is that neither framework adopted by the Bolsheviks for the development of their economic policies was fit for purpose and simply created serious problems that were impossible to resolve in the short period available.

Having considered the problematic role of frameworks for the Bolsheviks in crafting their

economic policies in the years after they assumed power, we can turn to a consideration of the influence of neoliberalism on the post-Soviet economic reformers. We shall see that the critiques of Keynesianism launched by the Chicago and Virginia schools created an ideational schemata that was to prove of great utility for Yegor Gaidar and his team, although it was modified in important ways by the reformers to take account of the specific situation in the newly-independent Russian Federation.

### 3.4 Neoliberalism

Recent predictions concerning the demise of neoliberalism have, to invoke Oscar Wilde, been greatly exaggerated<sup>44</sup>. The core doctrines of neoliberalism, which all revolve around the perniciousness of government intervention and complete ineffectiveness of state action vis-à-vis the economy, continue to prove attractive (or, in many cases, the least-worst option) to global policymakers as they seek to avoid the significant rise in borrowing costs associated with failing to rein in public-sector spending. Much furious ink has been spilled analysing and critiquing neoliberalism but often this shades into polemic that fails to advance our understanding of the different theoretical strands that have contributed to this ideology. Thus, neoliberal reforms have been blamed for (among other things) increasing the death rate<sup>45</sup> in post-Soviet Russia and dramatic rises in inequality (Stuckler, King and McKee, 2009; Paley, 2001). While not wishing to diminish the importance of empirical analyses or critical perspectives, the end result of this scholarship has been that we are left with at best a partial appreciation of the origins of neoliberalism that ultimately impedes our understanding of one of the dominant (at times hegemonic) perspectives of our age. Without a clearer conceptualisation of the foundational theoretical contributions to neoliberalism we cannot hope to chart how it has developed and risk significant confusion given the plethora

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<sup>44</sup>For a particularly cogent example of this, see the recent manuscript by Stephen Cohen and Bradford DeLong in which they argue that the age of neoliberalism is ending, the foundational ideas shattered by the recent financial crisis (Cohen and DeLong, 2010).

<sup>45</sup>For a response critiquing the methodology and findings of Stuckler *et al.* see Earle and Gehlbach (2011).

of recent anti-government movements that have emerged.

David Harvey represents one of the few clear exceptions to the above statement - his 2006 monograph represents a concise and compelling history of neoliberalism and we shall use it here to set the stage before beginning our examination of the intellectual roots of the doctrine. However, excellent as the book is, it focuses almost exclusively on the political aspects of neoliberalism, defining it as ‘a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade’ (Harvey, 2005, 2). Harvey identifies the two foundational ideas of neoliberalism as human dignity and individual freedom (Harvey, 2005) and he offers a compelling treatment of its political origins and features. But as Harvey himself recognises in his definition, the economic component of neoliberalism is at least as important as the political element. Moreover, this aspect has not received adequate scholarly attention thus far, representing a serious lacuna in our understanding<sup>46</sup>.

Harvey argues that neoliberalism emerged as a coherent doctrine in the 1970s, with a core belief that ‘human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade’ (Harvey, 2005, 2). The fundamental belief in the superiority of markets over state interference has a long pedigree in classical economics<sup>47</sup>, but neoliberalism represented a serious challenge to the politics of Keynesianism and any kind of government interference, even in cases that seem to be tailored for state intervention such as recessionary periods. As I argue below, the intellectual foundation for this attack was predicated on the Chicago School’s advocacy of monetarist policy and then latterly the Virginia School’s more

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<sup>46</sup>This is not a general trend, for there have been excellent books on the impact of economic ideas, the work of Daniel Rodgers, Mark Blyth and Keith Darden being but three examples (Rodgers, 1998; Blyth, 2002; Darden, 2009).

<sup>47</sup>Although some ‘classical’ economists are not the untrammelled advocates of free enterprise that contemporary discussion would have us believe. Adam Smith, in particular, had significant concerns over market-based solutions in some areas of life and did see governmental regulation as important.

generalised arguments concerning the inefficiency of state action.

Neoliberalism is a doctrine that has been many things to many people, from a re forging of Weber's iron cage that ensnares local populations in the straitjackets of the Washington Consensus to a liberating doctrine that fights against the venal and decrepit hand of government intervention. In seeking to explain the rise and global consolidation of neoliberalism, Harvey suggests that the central aspect has been 'a *political* project to...restore the power of economic elites' and that the central ideas of neoliberalism, whenever they have conflicted with this goal, are subordinated to this overarching project (Harvey, 2005, 19). Harvey does briefly note the economic roots of neoliberalism and its fundamental opposition to Keynesianism, as well as remarking on the importance of the Chicago School, but the discussion is peremptory and he is more concerned with the political history than an intellectual deconstruction of the movement (Harvey, 2005, 20-22, 54). Thus, we are still left wondering about the role economic theory plays in the growth of this particular ideology. Reading Harvey, one could get the impression that the economic ideas were simply useful ballast, convenient justificatory slogans for policies that had been designed long ago. This would be deeply unfortunate for our purposes, since it would imply that it could have little influence over Gaidar and his team, whereas I hope to show the exact opposite.

The following two subsections consider the two schools, describing their histories and central contributions to economics. A full archaeological investigation of these schools that adequately covered the nuances and intellectual strands is beyond the scope of this paper, since the aim here is to link their contributions with the reforms enacted in Russia and to demonstrate how the analytic research paradigms developed in both of them shaped and reinforced the attitudes of the primary reformers. Instead what I offer here is a rather broad characterisation, shaped by a discussion of the work of those considered to be the central instigators of the two schools.

### 3.4.1 The Chicago School

We begin our consideration of the economic influences undergirding neoliberalism by considering the Chicago School. We know from Gaidar's own testimony that he read the work of Milton Friedman at an early age (Gaidar, 1997), and Friedman's basic arguments against active governmental intervention in the economy formed a critical part of the anti-Keynesianism that came to dominate both mainstream economics and international organisations in the aftermath of the stagflation years of the 1970s. The central claim of the Chicago School for our purposes centres on the ineffectiveness of governmental intervention in monetary policy, since this provided intellectual justification for removing the state from questions of price adjustments and other forms of macroeconomic intervention and allowing the market to have the dominant role in the post-Soviet environment. We shall see below that the Virginia School played a critical supporting role in terms of providing the theoretical justification for privatisation.

While we do not have space to go into the specifics of Keynesian arguments here, the basic postulate is that the government can manage the inflation/unemployment tradeoff due to its monopolistic control over the money supply. This was formalised in a defining paper by William Phillips from 1958 that gave birth to the 'Phillips Curve' that expressed this relationship (Phillips, 1958). This offered formal and empirical support to John Maynard Keynes' argument that governments can act in a countercyclical fashion to blunt the extremes of the business cycle by increasing public spending to offset the fall in private expenditure during recessionary periods (Keynes, 1936). The work of Keynes and Phillips legitimised government intervention in the economy as correcting for the worst excesses of self-interested market behaviour and was the dominant macroeconomic school of thought until the ravages of stagflation in the 1970s forced its defenders onto the back foot (Sherman, 1976).

This is not to say that Keynesianism lacked critics or was bereft of controversy. Friedrich von Hayek published his *The Road to Serfdom*, a broadside against any governmental intervention in the shadow of Russian and German totalitarianism. Hayek argued that an

overweening state was a direct threat to individual liberty and an unstoppable force that would become all-consuming and that the marginal benefits hypothesised to accrue from this were greatly outweighed by the social and political costs (Hayek, 1994). As we shall see below, this type of criticism had more in common with the Virginia School's emphasis on the venality of bureaucrats. However, the Chicago School through Milton Friedman would offer a more subtle perspective that identified one of that major theoretical problems with Keynesianism and this would be formalised by Robert Lucas and Thomas Sargent. Before turning to the specifics of this critique, we should say something about the origins of the school from which this work emerged.

The Chicago School of economics emerged as a distinctive and cohesive approach to the discipline in the 1930s, achieving its culmination in the 1950s. Price theory was a fundamental component of the education provided to students in the economics department<sup>48</sup> and in terms of specific intellectual contributions to economics, the Chicago school is most famous for its strident opposition to Keynesianism and the belief the latter entailed with regard to the possibility of countercyclical intervention by the state in the economy. Embedded in this is a deep belief that the purpose of economics is to make contributions to policy debates: economics has the characteristics of a science, true, but it is one that is specifically oriented to practical debates (Emmett, 2009, 149). Emmett identifies two mutually-reinforcing basic methodological postulates of the Chicago school. The first was its commitment to positivism<sup>49</sup> and falsificationism, which we see most stridently expressed in Milton Friedman's justly-famous 1953 chapter (Friedman, 1953). The second is the axiom 'de gustibus non est

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<sup>48</sup>If there is anything that distinguishes Chicago economics from other schools of economic thought, it is the Chicago tradition's assumption that all you need is price theory' (Emmett, 2009, 147-148). Emmett notes the continuity in teaching of Marshallian price theory (Economics 301) from the 1920s to the present day as reinforcing this.

<sup>49</sup>Don Patinkin has argued that although there was broad continuity between the Chicago School with regard to the appropriate conduct of monetary policy (that the focus should be on consistent and stable emission of money, rather than countercyclical attempts to stabilise the price level that could result in inflationary pressure), the main difference was the the Chicagoans of the 1950s were interested in empirical verification of hypotheses, something which was not a concern of the earlier generation (Patinkin, 1981, Ch. 11).



disputandum’, developed most explicitly by Stigler and Becker twenty-five years later and which placed the explanatory burden on changes in opportunity cost rather than changes in taste. Emmett argues the latter is required to make the former efficacious because otherwise ‘a rejected hypothesis could always be rescued by the claim that tastes had changes’ (Emmett, 2009, 151).

Milton Friedman is the most famous scholar of the Chicago school and his work on the theory of money and inflation continues to be highly influential. Friedman’s early work on the optimum quantity of money exposed a serious problem for Keynesians, since it exposed the fact that in a subtle fashion it relies on individuals being ‘fooled’ and mistaking a nominal increase in the money supply for a real rise in incomes. Friedman, drawing on the adaptive expectations theory of Arrow and Newlove (Arrow and Nerlove, 1958), pointed out that over time governmental policy will lose effectiveness because the individuals in a given polity will adjust their expectations to take into account governmental action meaning that in the long run the Phillips curve becomes vertical. This did not preclude the existence of effective short-term interventions, something recognised by Friedman: ‘there is always a temporary trade-off between inflation and unemployment; there is no permanent trade-off’ (Friedman, 1968, 11). While Friedman may have believed that stable monetary policy was socially optimal, he lacked an axiomatic proof of this statement (Friedman, 1969). We can see some evidence of this in the way that the late Soviet system operated, with management of prices ultimately driving up inflation over the long-run and creating serious macroeconomic imbalances and hoarding, even if in the short term it proved somewhat effective in managing social welfare. While this was a strong critique of the ultimate costs of intervention over many periods, it did not provide the kind of theoretical ammunition required to argue for a full-scale withdrawal of the state from the economy that was necessary for the Gaidar’s team in order to outflank its more moderate rivals.

For this step, a more radical formulation of the Chicago School’s position was required. This would be achieved in a series of seminal papers by Thomas Sargent and Robert Lucas

(Sargent and Wallace, 1975; Lucas, 1973), drawing on a much stricter form of preference updating named ‘rational expectations’, which removed the lag present in the preceding form of adaptive expectations (Muth, 1961). Simultaneous updating of individual preferences allowed the authors to demonstrate in an axiomatic fashion that the Phillip’s Curve is vertical even in the short run. Therefore any intentional increase in the money supply will simply generate inflation, without decreasing the unemployment rate. Because inflation is costly, the conclusion of this research project was that governments should aim to keep the money supply constant, as this minimises transaction costs for individuals in a given society, thus supporting Friedman’s earlier hypothesis with an axiomatic foundation. This provided a critical supporting pillar for the neoliberal platform, which, as emphasised above, was deeply suspicious of government intervention, prioritising market-based solutions over state-led development. This was the step that was needed for Gaidar and his fellow reformers to demonstrate the necessity of removing the state as far as possible from interference in the economy and underlaid the basic tenets of price liberalisation and macroeconomic stability that were at the core of one half of shock therapy.

However, there was another critical pillar in the development of neoliberalism - the idea that government intervention was not simply useless but actively pernicious and a public bad. This was provided by the Virginia school and provided the analytical support for the programme of radical privatisation that Gaidar’s team prioritised above all else in the early years of the transition.

### 3.4.2 Virginia

The Virginia school’s approach is best exemplified by the work of a few leading scholars who pioneered the public choice approach<sup>50</sup> to political and economic questions. For the purposes

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<sup>50</sup>The distinction between social and public choice, according to Buchanan, is that while both adopt a model of individuals as *homo economicus*, social choice theory assumes the existence of a unique, socially-optimal outcome and is thus linked to a maximising, allocationist perspective, whereas public choice adopts an exchange-dominated perspective, shifting the emphasis from maximising social welfare functions to analysis of alternative institutions and rules (Buchanan, 1992, 74). The distinction between political economy and

of this paper I shall focus specifically on James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, two giants in this field <sup>51</sup>.

Buchanan himself attended Chicago and took Frank Knight's course on price theory, crediting this with transforming him from a libertarian socialist into a 'zealous advocate of the market order' (Buchanan, 1992, 5; Chap. V). However, he sees Knut Wicksell's work on taxation as having the greatest intellectual influence in terms of providing him with the tools to criticise the dominant system of public financing that would be the genesis of the public choice tradition<sup>52</sup>.

The essence of the Virginia school/public choice tradition is to analyse decisions from the perspective of individuals as utility-maximising agents, an approach that is foundational for the type of economic analysis known as game theory. Buchanan describes the writing of *The Calculus of Consent*, one of the classics of public choice theory and coauthored with Tullock in the following terms:

[T]here was no sense of "discovery" at any point in the book's construction, no moment of excitement...Tullock and I considered ourselves to be applying relatively simple economic analysis to the choice among alternative political decision rules, with more or less predictable results. (Buchanan, 1992, 9)

Buchanan, in particular, eschewed technical economic language. His series of critiques of Keynesian economics, most concisely expressed in Buchanan and Wagner (1977), looked not at the internal economic problems of Keynesian theory that had so exercised the Chicago

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public choice, again according to Buchanan, is that the former, inextricably tied to the classical approach, emphasises the importance of the market, whereas the latter emphasises the failure of politics (Buchanan, 1992, 100).

<sup>51</sup>Buchanan's reflections on the Virginia School are condensed in a lively chapter in his brief sketch of an autobiography (Buchanan, 1992, Chap. VII). He sees the focus on 'rules' and the stochastic element they introduce into individual decision-making as central to the tradition; he sees Tullock as introducing the element of *homo economicus* that would be essential for policy analysis (Buchanan, 1992, 96-98). We are here more concerned with the consequences of such an approach and how it links to neoliberalism.

<sup>52</sup>The opening and fifth chapters of Buchanan (1992) run through Buchanan's intellectual development and influences in far greater detail than I have scope to do here.

school, but rather at the political ramifications of Keynesianism, which he and Wagner summarised as being ‘the putative intellectual legitimacy provided to the natural and predictable political biases toward deficit spending, inflation, and the growth of government’ (Buchanan, 1992, 24). His basic point was that politicians are good at spending and bad at raising revenues, so the idea of deficit spending in recessionary times is deeply flawed because the politicians will never instigate fiscal retrenchment in good times as this will be unpopular. Interestingly, and unlike neoliberalism, Buchanan does not fault the vagaries of democracy for what he sees as the unsustainable fiscal position, but rather Keynesian economic theory (Buchanan and Wagner, 1977, 5).

Gordon Tullock, Buchanan’s co-author on a number of pioneering works in the public choice tradition, offers us the second component of the Virginia School’s critique of government intervention. This second aspect is essential for understanding the permeation of economic analysis into all aspects of government action and it goes significantly beyond the technical disputes over the efficacy of Keynesian intervention. Although he authored hundreds of scholarly articles that touch on this topic, the basic point is well expressed in a book written recently. The basic analytical point for Tullock is that public servants are not materially different from private individuals in terms of prioritising personal gain over public good (Tullock, Seldon and Brady, 2000). This seems an innocuous assumption, but it entails that allowing state officials discretion to craft policy opens a large and inviting window onto corruption given the distorted incentive structure. Tullock argues that the primary justification for government action is to offset negative externalities but that in a wide range of cases, government action results in a new and more pervasive set of negative externalities (Tullock, 2005).

The ultimate conclusion of this is that almost all forms of government intervention are subject to the same suspicion and have the same pathology, namely the potential for siphoning of rents by public officials. Individual companies face the same dilemmas, but the Virginia School’s response is that the market acts to discipline companies that are too venal;

there is no analogue to force governments to change track because functional governments are the monopolists *par excellence* within the confines of a given territory.

We could delve into this issue in far greater depth but it is more helpful for us to summarise the implications of the two schools for Gaidar and his reform team, which we do in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Chicago and Virginia critiques of Keynesianism and implications for Gaidar’s team

School	Critique of Keynesianism		Implication for Gaidar
	Chicago	Government intervention ineffective	
			Remove the state from the economy as much as possible
	Virginia	Government intervention damaging because taken by venal bureaucrats and impossible to scale back during non-recessionary periods	Privatise state-owned enterprises

This constitutes the basic ideational framework on which Gaidar implicitly relied to convince Yeltsin of his reform programme and to help him negotiate the morass of pathologies bedevilling the newly-independent Russian Federation when he was handed the keys to the economics ministry. As we shall see below, the crucial difference between Gaidar’s team and the Bolsheviks was that the former had spent years thinking about how to implement fundamental reforms to the Soviet system, meaning that they were in an excellent position to tailor the framework to the empirical position in which they found Russia in 1991. While there were reversions and the path of reform was far from smooth, there was no fundamental reversion to a formerly rejected policy or reliance on outright coercion to achieve their goals.

### 3.5 Russia and the New Reformers

We turn now to the empirical demonstration of the claim that the neoliberal framework was essential in terms of helping Yegor Gaidar and his team of reformers navigate the systemic uncertainty of the transition period following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Demonstrating the connection between neoliberalism and the Russian reforms is harder than the equivalent task for the Bolsheviks due to the weaker theoretical links between the post-Soviet reformers and the preceding literature. We should not expect to find the same tight links between the writings of Friedman, Buchanan and Gaidar and we look in vain for this kind of evidence. In its stead, what we find is that the intellectual architecture of the preceding neoliberal economists provided a tremendously useful framework and language that Gaidar could draw on to persuade Yeltsin of the value and importance of radical reforms, in particular with regard to removing property from state hands and the necessity of withdrawing the state from price supports. The former policy reflects the insights of the Virginia school, whereas the latter is more closely allied with the work of Friedman, Sargent and Lucas and the ineffectiveness of state intervention in monetary and fiscal policy.

The pace and structuring of the market transition in the former communist countries produced one of the most important and comprehensive debates in political science and economics, representing a rare occasion where both sides at least pretended to listen to the other. The proponents of shock therapy, or rapid reform, took the view that there was a window of opportunity to enact these radical changes that would close and trap countries in a suboptimal equilibrium (Åslund, 2007), meaning that those who took initial bold steps would see the best results. Subsequent work has found empirical support for this perspective, though there are significant problems of identification for the proposed mechanism (Laroisiere, 2001). Anders Åslund, who served as part of the foreign advising team in the years immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, argues in a provocative piece that the reason that economic reforms succeeded in creating a market-based economy whereas political reforms failed in creating a democracy was down to the seizure by the new

reformers of the ‘brief window of opportunity’ that lasted for around five months (Åslund, 2007, 6). Åslund is among the strongest defenders of shock therapy, which is perhaps unsurprising given his intimate involvement: ‘Mistakes were inevitable, but the biggest mistake was to wait, because to wait meant to fail’ (Åslund, 2007, 6). Åslund’s basic idea seems to rely on a tipping-point argument, such that once a sufficient number of radical reforms are passed, the reversal costs become prohibitively high. The alternative perspective argued strongly in favour of gradual reform, arguing that the logic behind rapid transformation was flawed and would exacerbate political and economic tensions (Stiglitz, 1998; Roland, 2002). According to this view, a slower transition path would allow for the building of political support for the reforms and allow for the inevitable pain to be smoothed over a number of years, rather than concentrated at the outset. It is not the prerogative of this paper to take sides in this debate, but as we shall see Gaidar was certainly aware of the concerns of the gradualists and sympathetic to the immense cost his reform programme asked the population to bear.

The economic situation of the late Soviet Union was dire, with huge budget and trade deficits, spiralling inflation, chronic shortages and systemic underutilisation of resources (including widespread underemployment). Janos Kornai’s extensive study catalogues the litany of pathologies that bedevilled the final few years of the Soviet Empire (Kornai, N.d.) and there seems limited sense in rehashing his conclusions. However, there are two economic pathologies that deserve particular mention since they bear directly on the nature of Gaidar’s reforms. The first of these is the justly-famous ‘soft budget constraint’. This was a system of state subsidisation that ensured that few Soviet enterprises would be driven out of business on the basis of their lack of competitiveness. This exacerbated the technological disparity between the Soviet Union and the West (Brown, 2009), but more importantly it fed into the ballooning budget deficit. In a sense, we can see this as a Soviet equivalent of the governments of the 1960s attempting to negotiate the Philips Curve tradeoff, tolerating high levels of inflation in order to maintain low levels of unemployment. Gaidar’s ending of this

damaging tradeoff had its roots in the Chicago workshops of the 1950s and 1960s.

The second serious problem was the growing scale of corruption by Soviet bureaucrats and managers of enterprises. This was related to soft budget constraints in so far as these generated insulation and space to engage in nefarious activities, but the extent of this in the late-Soviet era was astonishing. Steven Solnick, in his work on this period, identifies that the rot had spread as far as the Komsomol and notes that while Gorbachev's reforms provided much-needed openness, they were impotent regarding the crisis of accountability (Solnick, 1999). This generated the phenomenon of 'spontaneous privatisation' when it became clear that the Soviet Union was completely unable to enforce the state's property rights (Johnson, Kroll and Eder, 1994); this basically amounted to widescale expropriation of assets by state managers and was strangely similar to the early years of nationalisation under the Bolsheviks before VSNKh began exercising control of the process. This behaviour of venal bureaucrats mapped very well onto the Virginia School's predictions concerning the corruptibility of public sector employees and was a powerful bulwark to the argument in favour of voucher privatisation adopted by Gaidar and his team.

Unlike the situation at the collapse of the Russian Empire, where many of the leading Bolsheviks were both abroad and working on abstract problems of Marxism unrelated to the problems facing their home country, many trained Soviet economists were publishing working drafts and circulating papers trying to address the specifics of the deep structural problems of the Soviet Union. Most prominent among these was the 500-Day Plan, based on a draft reform programme developed by Gregory Yavlinskii and authorised by the Shatalin group that had been formed by Gorbachev in the attempt to forge a compromise with a resurgent Yeltsin in August 1990 (Hewett, 1990). The logic behind this proposal was to create a functional market economy in 500 days and central to the proposals was the recognition of the importance for building popular support for the reforms. For this reason many of the most painful decisions were deferred to later phases of the reform process (namely price rationalisation and other central planks of macroeconomic stabilisation), while popular



measures such as the sale of state-owned assets were given initial prominence (Hewett, 1990). Yegor Gaidar, among others, supported the general outline of such a project, believing that ‘achieving deep, but nonetheless staged, orderly reforms (добиться глубоких, но все же постепенных, упорядочных реформ)’ was essential to prevent social dislocations and economic pain for the Soviet population on the path to capitalism (Gaidar, 1997, 232). In comparison with the subsequent radical reforms, the slow-moving plan for privatisation was unremarkable, but it proved too controversial for the central authorities of the Soviet Union (Colton, 2008, 188). Gorbachev reneged on his commitment to push through with the 500-Day Plan under pressure from Soviet hardliners (particularly Nikolai Ryzhkov (Brown, 2007)). However, the plan would continue to hold influence over large numbers of economists who sought to advise Boris Yeltsin in the subsequent months and it was an important inflection point for Gaidar and the team he would lead, who became convinced that the pace of reform was too slow.

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the central government of the newly-independent Russian Federation was forced to confront a daunting litany of problems. In the economic sphere alone there were a number of critical tasks; the establishment of a new currency, price liberalisation and privatisation were among the most pressing issues facing the new government. McFaul notes that the budget deficit in August 1991 constituted twenty percent of GDP due to the inability of the late Soviets to reform the economy and (in particular) rationalise prices (McFaul, 2001, 141). By the end of 1991, production would be at just 79% of the level of 1990 and retail prices had more than tripled; meanwhile the printing of the all-Union rouble by the other republics had caused a fall in value against the dollar of 86% (Aron, 2000, 481). Such a situation was evidently untenable and required the immediate attention of the new rulers of the country.

Boris Yeltsin was in many ways a good choice to lead the newly-independent Russian Federation away from the economic mess of the late-Soviet era. He had a solid understanding of many of the problems that bedevilled the Soviet system in virtue of his positions at

Sverdlovsk and Moscow and as Colton notes, he ‘nibbled at the edges of what was admissible in late Soviet conditions and presaged what he was to do in the reform era’ (Colton, 2008, 94). This included the development of soft incentives for his workforce to increase productivity and a detailed understanding of the breakdown of the supply chain between various industries. These characteristics would serve him well in terms of allowing him to identify just how broken was the economic system he inherited and to give support to his new government as they launched the reform programme that was designed to extract the Russian Federation from its untenable position. However, as we have seen in the first paper, Yeltsin was a man who relied primarily on his instincts rather than developing coherent plans to solve problems; Colton notes that he supported a ‘wacky’ plan in 1990 that proposed using a secondary currency to motivate workers (Colton, 2008, 188). His economic fixes during his managerial tenure in the Soviet Union were designed to solve specific problems, but there is no sense that he developed a compelling and coherent alternative beyond a sense that the problems were extraordinarily severe. Unlike the situation with regard to state- and nation-building, in the realm of economics he was fortunate to be able to call on the services of individuals who had thought deeply about the problems facing the Soviet Union, witnessed the failure of the 500-Day Plan and, utilising their knowledge and understanding of neoclassical economics, crafted a programme of shock therapy that aimed to place Russia on an irreversible path to capitalism.

The most prominent of these economists, and the man who will accordingly play a central role for our purposes, was Yegor Gaidar. Gaidar was a hereditary member of the Soviet elite, the grandson of the writer Arkady Gaidar and son of the naval commander Timur Gaidar. He enjoyed a more cosmopolitan upbringing than was possible for the vast majority of his compatriots, spending time in Yugoslavia and having access to foreign economic works such as Samuelson and Adam Smith (Gaidar, 1997). He completed his undergraduate studies in the economics faculty at MGU and continued his study of Western economists including Ricardo, Mill, Böhm-Bawerk, Jevons, Marshall, Pigou, Keynes, Schumpeter, Galbraith, Friedman

and many others. He records in his memoirs that it was around this time that he became disenchanted with the Soviet economic system, but also rejected the Yugoslav alternative as producing unemployment and high inflation. As a result, he found himself at an ‘intellectual dead-end [оказываюсь в интеллектуальном тупике]’ (Gaidar, 1997, 195), and commenced work at the All-Union Research Institute of System Research (VNICI) studying economic reform and enjoying considerable intellectual freedom. As we have already noted, by 1986 Gaidar and a number of other young economists were meeting to discuss how to reform the Soviet Union’s increasingly moribund economy and became more open to radical market reforms as the only real remedy (Gaidar, 1997, 213); he became convinced of the necessity of ensuring an irrevocable break with the Soviet past following the coup attempt in 1991, which demonstrated the lengths to which hardliners in the Soviet apparatus would go in order to preserve the system (Gaidar, 1997, 255).

By the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was far from clear whom Yeltsin would choose to spearhead his economic reforms. There were at least five ‘advising’ teams surrounding Yeltsin during this time, including the nucleus of the group who had designed the 500-Day Plan (Yeltsin, 1994), but his chief advisor, Gennady Burbulis, impressed upon Yeltsin the value of appointing an independent man to become Prime Minister, namely the 35-year old Yegor Gaidar (Colton, 2008, 224-225). Yeltsin, in his *View from the Kremlin*, provides some valuable information concerning his selection of Gaidar as the leader of his reform efforts in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse. He says that he elected to go with Gaidar because ‘[h]e would fight for his own principles and ideas to the end, precisely because they were his own, achieved through suffering’ (Yeltsin, 1994, 125). He also talks of Gaidar’s ability to ‘infect people with his ideas’ (*Ibid.*) and to explain complex concepts in simple language; both hallmarks of the fact that Gaidar had a developed plan in place well before the ultimate dissolution of the Soviet Union. Yeltsin vacillates in terms of his position on how much he understood of the proposed programme of radical reform, and it is likely that the more technical aspects escaped him, but Gaidar convinced him of the necessity of

pushing ahead with a radical programme in order to make any reversion to the Soviet system impossible.

The plan devised by Gaidar's team was undeniably bold. Gaidar planned for near-immediate price liberalisation in order to eliminate the monetary overhang and deal with the spiralling problem of inflation in one sharp shock but in a sharp divergence from the standard transition model, he placed privatisation in front of other forms of macroeconomic stabilisation and pushed a Privatisation Bill through in December 1991, one month after taking office as Minister for the Economy and Vice Prime Minister (Shleifer and Treisman, 2000). The privatisation scheme was planned as a voucher programme, designed to place property in private hands as quickly as possible and limit the corruption by existing managers of state-owned property; while this was designed to grow popular support for the reforms (Boycko, Shleifer and Vishny, 1994), it was exhibited the influence of the Virginia School in terms of removing as much property from state-controlled hands as quickly as possible. The privatisation scheme was largely completed by 1994 and while the process was far from smooth, with much of the valuable property ending up in the hands of employees (Shleifer and Treisman, 2000, Ch. 2), there were relatively few alternatives given the appalling situation of state-owned enterprises at the collapse of the Soviet Union and further delay was unlikely to materially improve the situation.

There was initial widespread support for the rapid transition to market system, with even Ruslan Khasbulatov, the obstreperous leader of the unreformed parliament, voicing his support in the first months after the collapse of the Soviet Union<sup>53</sup>, though this would not last and he would prove instrumental in ousting Gaidar from his position as Acting Prime Minister as soon as Yeltsin's decree powers elapsed in late 1992. The central problem was that while there was widespread acknowledgement of the necessity for sacrifices, no one grasped how deep the output fall would be or how severe the drop in living standards, meaning that

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<sup>53</sup>In a pseudo-memoir published in 1993, he quotes Margaret Thatcher in an approving fashion as demonstrating the dangers of an overly-invasive state (Khasbulatov, 1993).

no political support was developed to facilitate the long-term commitment to the reform process (McFaul, 2001). Indeed, one of the primary critiques of Gaidar and his team was that they were uninterested or unconcerned with the political task of building support for the reforms. However, this is not entirely accurate. Notwithstanding their commitment to full-scale market reforms, the Gaidar team from the outset acknowledged the importance of making some concessions to the political environment, deciding not to implement full macroeconomic stabilisation as this would have generated significant unemployment and ‘they would have been thrown from office within months’ (Layard, 1993, 16). Gaidar himself acknowledges that he recognised from the outset that the social costs would be extremely high; he recognised that the monetary overhang would inevitably lead to a loss of savings but saw no genuine alternative to radical reforms in terms of making an irrevocable commitment to market mechanisms and ensuring that a reversion to socialism was impossible (Gaidar, 1997, 269).

Justifying his dismissal of Gaidar, Yeltsin argues that ‘Gaidar never fully understood what industry was all about...All of his knowledge was rather theoretical in nature, which was potentially quite dangerous’ (Yeltsin, 1994, 200). Given his knowledge of industry during his time in Sverdlovsk and on the city council in Moscow, it is clear that for Yeltsin this failure to comprehend the specifics of industrial reform was a major blot in Gaidar’s copybook and it was unsurprising when he replaced him with the more experienced hand of Viktor Chernomyrdin, who shared with Yeltsin a deep understanding of the specifics of Soviet industry and who had known Yeltsin since the early 1980s through work in the gas sector (Colton, 2008, 84). However painful it was for Gaidar to be cast from office, he had already placed the economy on a strongly reformist path and while there were slowdowns and reversions under Chernomyrdin, the overall direction was not lost (Colton, 2008). This, above all, speaks of the power of Gaidar’s plan, informed by recent developments in neoliberal economic theory. He had convinced Yeltsin of the programme, taken the most difficult initial steps and ensured full reverse was no longer possible. While debates over the extreme human

cost of shock therapy are ongoing and the programme remains controversial, there is little doubt that Gaidar achieved something quite remarkable in such a limited time, thanks chiefly to his possession of a clear and flexible framework and the years he spent considering how to reform the Soviet behemoth.

## 3.6 Conclusion

In describing the field of economics, Thomas Carlyle famously suggested that it was a ‘dreary, desolate and, indeed, quite abject and distressing [subject]; what we might call, by way of eminence, the *dismal science*’ (Carlyle, 1850, 530-1; emphasis Carlyle’s). We have seen in this paper that matters can become very dismal indeed, from the costly vacillations of the Bolsheviks in their shift between the excesses of War Communism and the attempt to restore Russia to the path of capitalist development to the dreadful foreknowledge of Yegor Gaidar and his team that their programme would cause pain and immiseration to countless numbers of their compatriots. Economic transformations of the magnitudes seen in this paper inevitably generate tremendous social dislocation and resentment towards the new government from all quarters. Like asking the proverbial Irishman for directions, the lesson for most governments is ‘not to start from here’, but in times of the total collapse of authority, the new leaders may have little choice.

In this paper I have sought to build on the foundation we established previously concerning the role and importance of ideational frameworks in minimising the cost of transition by ensuring that a coherent and clear policy can be followed that avoids reversals and awkward compromises to the greatest extent possible. We have introduced a second dimension to our understanding of frameworks, namely the extent to which they are flexible and adaptable to actual conditions on the ground. This should not be confused with the first dimension; as we have seen, pragmatic frameworks are highly flexible, but leave new governments open to crafting a series of damaging compromises with no real understanding of how they are

linked or what is the underlying logic behind them. Rather the point, which we illustrated by comparing the Bolsheviks with the Gaidar-led post-Soviet economic reformers, is that pre-existing frameworks tend not to map well onto the specific problems of a particular locale. For the Bolsheviks, who drew on decades of debates over the eventual and inevitable collapse of capitalism, the focus of this framework was on the shift from advanced industrial societies, meaning problems of rural integration and the overhaul of state-led development were largely ignored, even they were the most pressing issues for post-revolutionary Russia. The very fact that the Bolsheviks largely subscribed to a framework that predicted the extreme unlikelihood of genuine revolution in their country due to the dialectical nature of natural laws meant that they had little incentive to consider these problems, exacerbating an already severe situation. This was manifest in the work of Georgi Plekhanov, who started his intellectual career with a deep appreciation of the specifics of the nature of the Russian peasantry but swiftly changed his theoretical perspective to hew closer to orthodox Marxism, relegating the peasantry to the role of historical bystanders. Lenin and Bukharin both touch on the peasantry in their writings, but not with the depth or precision that would have been necessary to articulate coherent policies in the aftermath of the November Revolution.

Gaidar's team had its own problems and nowhere here is it argued that the reforms were an unsurpassed success. The refusal of the economic team to demonstrate any interest in the murkier elements of politics along with their fatalistic attitude that the government would be short-lived virtually guaranteed that their programme would be diluted and partially halted in the subsequent years, and so it proved under the steady hand of Viktor Chernomyrdin. Nevertheless, the remarkable speed with which the team was able to assemble a coherent programme and convince Yeltsin of its merits (neither easy tasks) testifies to both the time they had spent thinking about how to transform the Soviet economy and the role of the neoliberal economic framework in terms of providing the tools and policies to further their desires. However, we have also seen that it was critical for the reformers to alter the standard neoliberal reform package, pushing ahead with privatisation rather than macroeconomic

stabilisation as the first priority. Their primary goal was to make the return to a state-directed economy unthinkable and, thanks to voucher privatisation and price liberalisation, they basically achieved this in the year the team was in office, demonstrating and validating the importance of understanding how to use a pre-existing framework and which are the crucial modifications to apply it to local conditions.

One theme that is implicit in this discussion of the post-Soviet phase but has not been examined in detail is the connection of democracy with radical economic reform. In the first paper we saw that contemporary democratic theory has struggled to articulate a language of state- and nation-building that is not parasitic on problematic notions of equal citizenship, as highlighted by the work of Will Kymlicka. We have seen in the empirical discussion of the economic reforms that concerns over democratic legitimacy impeded reform efforts, slowing their progress and ultimately leading to the removal of Gaidar and his team. This created an awkward halfway house with regard to the state of economic reforms and territory prime for rent expropriation and the mushrooming of corruption.

While the reforms were costly, we can perhaps fruitfully compare the situation in Russia with that in Chile twenty years prior. In that case, as in the Russian Federation, a group of economists had been working for a few years articulating a vision of reform that would overthrow the state-dominated economic planning of the existing regime. There, as in Russia, the reformers were heavily influenced by neoliberal reforms and persuaded a powerful political leader to implement their reforms over the objections of more moderate members of the government (Constable and Valenzuela, 1991, 166). The critical difference was that these reformers were given political protection to implement their schemes in light of the fact that the overthrow of the preceding regime took place by military coup and installed a general, Augusto Pinochet, with little patience for opposing views. The reforms had initially similar effects in terms of spiking unemployment and a rise in inequality (Paley, 2001), but the general architecture has proved remarkably enduring and there have been few efforts to change the economic system in the aftermath of Pinochet's removal in 1990, and the



subsequent governments have improved some of the mistakes made during the Pinochet years by the advisors who were unwilling to alter their plans in the face of overwhelming evidence of macroeconomic problems (Dominguez, 1998).

This suggests that there is a further tension between democracy and radical reforms, in that deep-seated and unpopular measures that are sometimes necessary are hard to implement and even harder to sustain given this form of governance. While there has been fascinating recent work on states of emergencies as a kind of release valve for democracies (Agemben, 2005), alongside an emerging criticism of liberal democratic thought that the people are not always disposed to make the best choices on certain issues (Conly, 2013), it is clear that we need a better response to justify why liberal democracies are an appropriate choice during these periods of extraordinary crisis, or whether there should be limits on the extent of popular choice to ensure reforms can be implemented. This all presupposes, of course, that there is a coherent reform programme in place and it is to this question, rather than the more fundamental concern just raised, that this particular paper is devoted.

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## Chapter 4

# Ideational Legacies and Authoritarian Consolidation

# Introduction

Jacques Mallet du Pan coined perhaps the most famous statement concerning the consolidation of a (revolutionary) regime when, in characterising the bloody aftermath of the events of 1789, he noted that ‘As with Saturn, the revolution devours its children’ (Pan, 1793, 80). The desire to sweep away the original architects of the overthrow of the old order is understandable; they have accrued precious authority and legitimacy in virtue of their deeds and this can prove highly problematic for the second generation, which is tasked with the intimidating task of continuing the work of such illustrious predecessors. In particular, these fathers (or mothers, in rare cases) of the revolution are capable of acting, often unknowingly, as brakes on subsequent attempts to develop the project in a different direction and their stature can be so great that it continues to influence proceedings long after they have departed the arena. This was certainly the case with Vladimir Lenin, whose legacy was still a powerful influence over Mikhail Gorbachev (Brown, 2007), but this example is far from exceptional due to the cachet that attaches to leading such tumultuous events<sup>1</sup>. The long shadow of such figures can augment the complexity of an already difficult task, for the process of consolidating these regimes is often no less demanding than marshalling the initial impetus for the revolution. Indeed, exacerbated by the attenuation of the revolutionary spirit and the unstable foundation prepared in the preceding years, it is an entirely different challenge and one that often carries even greater implications for social welfare as it establishes patterns of behaviours and interactions that persist well beyond the evanescent triumphs of the early days.

That being said, regime consolidation is, as the very term suggests, inherently less exciting than revolution; more staid and planned, less emotional and exuberant and thus less invigorating as a topic of study<sup>2</sup>. It typically involves the relinquishing of the idealised and

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<sup>1</sup>The positive re-evaluation of Mao Zedong in the upswing of Chinese nationalism in the 1990s is another compelling case (Zhao, 1997).

<sup>2</sup>Indeed, Jeff Goodwin’s recent book on revolutions and revolutionary movements has no space devoted to a discussion of the consolidatory period (Goodwin, 2001).

utopian hopes of the first generation and the acceptance of patterns of habituation, although there is undoubtedly comfort that arises from the realisation that all parties are willing to accept the rules of the game and the possibility of dramatic overthrow and serious internal conflict is now remote (Schedler, 2001). As we shall see in this paper, this by no means entails that the consolidation period is peaceful and sedate; the connection between terror and revolutionary consolidation has had a long legacy since du Pan's observation (Strauss, 2002), and enforcing ideological uniformity among the regime elite is frequently a violent exercise (Conquest, 1990). This is true even for those who assume control of regimes that are more straightforwardly authoritarian than revolutionary, as is the case when Vladimir Putin formally succeeded Boris Yeltsin in the Kremlin in 2000. Moreover, in comparison to the process of regime overthrow, consolidation (especially in authoritarian states) has remained poorly theorised and underexamined, with most scholarly accounts focusing either on the unique dynamics of a limited number of countries or crafting overly generalised accounts producing largely tautologous nostrums and thus failing to advance our understanding of the actual processes and decisions in play. This is particularly the case with regard to the impact of ideational legacies of the initial period, which are frequently ignored or downplayed in favour of the more concrete processes of institutionalisation or charismatic domination by leading figures. It is this general lacuna that the current paper is concerned with correcting, picking up at the closing period of the first two periods and demonstrating the tight links between the tasks left unfulfilled and the subsequent attempts to tighten the grasp on power of Joseph Stalin and Vladimir Putin.

Thus the empirical focus of this paper is on the rule of two men largely responsible for consolidating the regimes that overthrew the crumbling Russian and Soviet Empires, Stalin<sup>3</sup> and Putin, respectively. Both men took control of regimes that had withstood serious initial crises (the Russian Civil War and the Constitutional Crisis of 1993) but that were

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<sup>3</sup>Stalin was undeniably important in the first generation of revolutionaries but perhaps not in the same rank as Lenin and Trotskii. We shall return to this point below.

far from fully consolidated when they assumed power. As we have seen from the first two papers, the Bolsheviks had articulated a flexible and compelling nationalities policy but their prevarications in the realm of economics were threatening to cause significant disruption to their rule as a result of the switch between War Communism and the New Economic Policy. Stalin would seize on this problem in the late 1920s and over the course of the following five years completely shift the Bolshevik nationality policy away from the embracing of local nationalities to favour centralisation. For the post-Soviets, the weakness of state-building under Yeltsin, in particular with regard to the situation in the North Caucasus, was the most pressing issue for Vladimir Putin and his first actions as President were directed to resolving this issue. In terms of economic reforms, the country had strayed somewhat from the path of reform articulated by Yegor Gaidar and his team but the principal problems here arguably also related to the weakness of the state and bureaucracy rather than to the direct decisions taken in the early years following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Stalin and Putin were thus presented with a serious challenge in terms of clear and undeniable weaknesses in the regimes they inherited that required sustained attention from both and the ability to overcome entrenched opposition to achieve their ultimate goals. However, the fact that the previous rulers presented such a mixed inheritance also represented a great opportunity to refashion the regimes under their command and the principal claim of this paper is that they would use the unfinished tasks of the first generation to directly influence progress in the other sphere<sup>4</sup>.

The central claim of this paper therefore revolves around the implications of the legacies of the ideational frameworks bequeathed by the early Bolsheviks and the Yeltsin administrations. We renew our interest in the spheres of state- and nation-building (repeating our geographical concentration on the North Caucasus region) and the economy but in this instance, in place of focusing on how and why certain frames helped the new governments

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<sup>4</sup>There were obviously more than two spheres of interest for these men besides the economy and nation- and state-building, but this paper will focus explicitly on these two to maintain analytical continuity with the two earlier papers in the project.

to navigate periods of uncertainty, we consider the implications of the failed halves of the projects. The purpose of so doing is to demonstrate both the social welfare costs of leaving critical tasks incomplete and also to show the opportunity this creates for a determined ruler to capitalise on this uncertainty and redirect the nature of reforms. We can go further, in fact, and argue that the very fact of leaving central planks of reform unfinished or failing entirely generates the conditions for this kind of leader to emerge<sup>5</sup>, claiming changes are necessary to avert the otherwise irreversible decline of the new state. This tactic was used by both Putin and Stalin as they sidelined opposition and removed those who were unwilling or unable to accede to the new ruling strategies, fundamentally remaking the political and economic realities of their countries in the process.

This is not to say that either Putin or Stalin enjoyed unalloyed success in their endeavours or that their policies were without huge social welfare cost. Stalin's drive to industrialisation, collectivisation and centralisation generated extraordinary costs to the peoples of the Soviet Union, leading to famine and widespread repression of individuals for extremely minor crimes. His policies inflamed the North Caucasus and antagonised many of the peoples who had benefited significantly from the earlier policy implemented by Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities; a policy he subsequently rejected wholesale. Putin's excesses were less egregious, although his decision to launch the Second Chechen War in September 1999 caused significant immiseration to the peoples of the region, generating huge population displacement and leading to a dramatic upsurge in the cycle of serious human-rights abuses. He forced the republics to relinquish much of their power, revoking the bilateral deals that had been struck with Yeltsin and installing a series of local leaders who paid obeisance to Moscow rather than Nalchik or Magas, with dire results in many cases, stagnating the already dreadful economic situation of the region. The intrusion of the state into many areas of the economy perhaps put paid to the most nefarious corrupt practices that characterised the late Yeltsin period,

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<sup>5</sup>Thus perhaps providing further theoretical underpinnings for Juan Linz's observation that totalitarian regimes tend to generate strong leaders while underlining the fact that his distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes is not robust on this front (Linz, 2000).

but also generated structural problems that slowed its growth and led to a huge over-reliance on natural resources as a motor for continued expansion, bequeathing a troubling legacy that the current government (again under the reins of Putin) has yet to resolve.

As with the initial two papers, a comprehensive weighing of the errors and excesses of the policies pursued is beyond the scope of the current work. Rather our focus is on advancing our understanding of the dynamics of consolidation and putting greater ballast behind the limited explanations thus far advanced for this critical aspect of regime development. The paper also provides a pleasing coda to the entire dissertation project; we have seen that specific types of frameworks are extremely important for helping the leading figures of post-imperial governments navigate the total uncertainty of the initial few years of governments, but we see here that the tasks they leave uncompleted or unaddressed provide important leverage for the second generation to recast the revolutionary settlement and greatly influence the subsequent trajectory of the regime.

This paper proceeds in the following fashion. The following section reviews the relatively brief literature on revolutionary regimes and consolidation, noting that for the most part ideational factors are ignored in favour of more tangible and material outcomes. The third section considers the implications of the preceding two papers for regime consolidation, noting the importance of unfinished tasks for providing ideational leverage to second-generation rulers. Next we turn to the justification of the comparison between the Putin and Stalin regimes before embarking on the empirical meat of the paper in virtue of engaging the comparison just outlined. The final section concludes.

## 4.1 Literature Review

Before engaging with the theoretical and empirical parts of this paper, we need to review the literature on regime consolidation in order to appreciate the contribution made by the current work. Because this literature is relatively limited, we shall consider both authoritarian and



democratic consolidation, though our focus in this paper is evidently firmly on the former of these given the cases under examination. Simplifying somewhat, we can note that the focus of much of the literature on regime consolidation cleaves largely into two groups. On the one hand we have extremely focused studies of particular cases, instructive about the unique processes that generated the persistence of particular regimes but demonstrating marginal interest in the generalisability of such processes. On the other, scholars who have worked on this problem with the aim of generating theoretical insights have tended to devote their attention to easily quantifiable institutional achievements that obscure as much as they illuminate. Samuel Huntington's 'two-turnover test' for new democracies, which suggests that the new regime is consolidated once power has changed hands twice, is perhaps the most well-known statement of this kind (Huntington, 1991), but it is by no means exceptional in terms of focusing on an easily measurable institutional process. These are undeniably important contributions to this nascent research paradigm, but such high-level work typically ignores the pertinent observation that the nature of consolidation will be heavily conditioned by what occurred during the transitional phase. This is even more important for those regimes that are established in post-imperial environments, where the basic political and economic foundations of the preceding regime are swept away with the preceding regime and fundamental root-and-branch reform is required, as was the case for both Bolshevik Russian and the post-Soviets. We should also note, as with the literature touching on the preceding two papers' areas' of interest, the general absence of ideational factors from the analysis, which we shall touch on in more detail momentarily.

We begin with the literature on democratic consolidation. Democratic regimes follow broadly the same trajectory of consolidation as they are (in the ideal) inherently rule-based, relying on defined periods for changes of power and formalising the distribution of resources through established channels and with a strong reliance on a depoliticised bureaucracy. It is perhaps unsurprising that one recent study has found that democracy is most likely to be consolidated when there is a large degree of predictability and moderation on both sides,

sharply limiting the incentives to overthrow the regime (Alexander, 2002). While neither of the regimes under study can be classified as falling into this category of regime, notwithstanding initial high hopes that the Russian Federation would develop in this direction (Fish, 1995), the work on democratic consolidation has made greater theoretical advances than the work on authoritarian regimes, which remains at a relatively early stage of expostulation. I suspect this is in part due to the factors alluded to in the opening sentence of this paragraph, although the O'Donnell and Schmitter's work on 'coup poker' represented a novel development that has subsequently been the basis for fascinating studies by Acemoglu and Robinson (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006)<sup>6</sup>. We have already seen in the introduction that Huntington's view of consolidation rested largely on institutional achievements in terms of the ability to transfer power peacefully (Huntington, 1991). Guiseppe di Palma deliberately sought to separate the consolidation of democracy from the circumstances of its birth whilst advising against an overly schematic focus on institutional achievements; ultimately he wanted to 'debunk' the focus on consolidation as misguided and unhelpful to understanding the progress of regimes (di Palma, 1990). Schmitter and Santiso adopt a more moderate approach, noting that the temporal dimension of consolidation is extremely complex both in terms of the *Zeitgeist* and the subjective management by the central actors in terms of gauging the sequencing of reforms whilst also cautioning scholars to be aware of the extent to which equifinality is essential for understanding outcomes (Schmitter and Santiso, 1998). Looking closer to Russia and with a more applied lens, Milada Vachudova has argued that international pressure (specifically the conditionality of European Union membership) was instrumental in ensuring the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe did not lurch back into authoritarianism (Vachudova, 2005). There are many other works we could list, but the basic parameters of democratic consolidation have been well established, though this does not mean they are necessarily easy to install.

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<sup>6</sup>Work itself that built on the fundamental repression/toleration tradeoff identified by Dahl many years previously (Dahl, 1971).

Recent years have seen great interest in the question of authoritarian persistence<sup>7</sup>, with a number of important contributions published surveying the strategies and techniques deployed by authoritarian rulers to maintain their (or their elite's) hold on power (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Brownlee, 2007; Magaloni, 2006). This has built on the scholarship on democratic consolidation that flourished in the early 1990s with the collapse of the Soviet Union (Huntington, 1991; di Palma, 1990), although the classic studies long pre-date these works (Fainsod, 1963; Zolberg, 1966; O'Donnell, 1973). With very few exceptions, this literature has relied primarily on material and institutional variables to explain this process and has largely ignored the importance of ideational factors in driving these outcomes. Even where scholars have paid attention to non-material factors in contributing to the stabilisation of regimes, the relevance of the ideational inheritance from the first group who inaugurated the regime change has barely featured in their analysis. This trend perhaps reflects justified methodological circumspection concerning the necessity of holding the two processes distinct; we see this most clearly articulated in Dankart Rustow's useful distinction between genetic and functional processes (Rustow, 1970), with regime change falling into the former camp and consolidation the latter.

The assumption of the quasi-modernisationist transitologists that in the aftermath of the Cold War all regimes would arrive at democracy has proven to be extremely problematic and stimulated a research programme devoted to understanding how authoritarian regimes persist (Carothers, 2002). Until the recent work by Levitsky and Way (Levitsky and Way, 2010), the majority of work on authoritarian consolidation focused on a small cluster of regimes, making generalisation difficult and unwieldy. H. E. Chehabi and Juan Linz, in their work on sultanistic regimes, identify a partial modernisation of the country combined

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<sup>7</sup>Persistence and consolidation are two separate analytical processes, though they are quite clearly related since it is hard to have a genuine case of the former without the latter. Consolidation is the process by which a regime reifies particular patterns of behaviour and distribution of resources, dramatically limiting (if not entirely foreclosing) alternative proposals. Persistence should arguably be restricted to the study of the continuation and evolution of these processes, but given the limited literature on this topic as a whole, we shall sidestep this important distinction in this paper and defer to later scholars to make advances in this area.

with rural apathy as being major contributors to the persistence of this particular genus of authoritarian regimes (Chehabi and Linz, 1998). Eva Bellin noted the importance of natural-resource rents for stabilising the regimes of the Middle East and severing the link between rulers and ruled (Bellin, 2004). Both Beatriz Magaloni, in her investigation of the persistence of the PRI and Jason Brownlee in his more comparative work across four regimes identify the central role that ruling parties can play in facilitating consolidation (Magaloni, 2006; Brownlee, 2007). Examining Maoist China, Julia Strauss has argued that a series of political campaigns designed to either marginalise or incorporate external groups were central to the consolidation of the revolutionary regime, which relied on a complex combination of paternalism and terror to bolster public support (Strauss, 2002). Levitsky and Way conducted a remarkable review of thirty-five cases to understand the nature of ‘hybrid’ regimes, namely those with both autocratic and quasi-democratic features. This represents a tremendous advance on previous scholarship but the explanatory burden falls on structural and institutional factors combining the linkage with the West and the organisational power of incumbent autocrats to explain the likelihood of authoritarian persistence (Levitsky and Way, 2010). There is limited scope for ideational factors in explaining organisational strength and thus we have a restricted understanding of how such regimes are able to build strong parties of power and channel popular preferences to sideline opposition movements.

Having provided an overview of the work on consolidation, we can now move to consider the implications of this current paper for our understanding of ideational frameworks, thus relating this paper to the overall project.

## 4.2 Implications for Frameworks

As noted above, in the first two papers we constructed a scheme for understanding how and why a specific form of ideational framework contributes to the successful resolution of problems of order in environments of post-imperial collapse. We found that the ideal

ideational frameworks were both clear and flexible, providing coherent policy advice and yet capable of being adapted to reflect the empirical realities on the ground. We found further that these kind of frameworks emerged from sustained debate between protagonists but also required great familiarity with local conditions, something that the Gaidar team in post-Soviet Russia exemplified but that was also represented by the development of Soviet nationality policy, which drew on the work of Otto Bauer and sought to modify this to make it amenable to the situation facing the Bolsheviks in 1917. While possession of this kind of framework was far from a guarantee of success, the alternatives were near-disastrous and resulted in vacillatory policies involving significant compromises that ultimately resulted in huge social-welfare costs.

This paper's aim is rather different from the first two, although in scope it is complementary. Instead of looking to further refine our understanding of the fundamental dynamics of ideational frameworks, we shift to examining the implications of the successes and failures in the two cases under study for the consolidation of regimes. The central finding of this current paper is that determined second-generation leaders can utilise the unfinished parts of the initial agendas to refashion even successful post-imperial policies. However, while these failures can provide useful justifications for the changes to the governing structure, overcoming these problems in a convincing fashion is far from trivial. We shall see that Stalin's drive to collectivisation and industrialisation required alarming sacrifices on behalf of the Soviet population, with horrific famines and widespread reliance on coercion to implement these policies (particularly in the North Caucasus). Meanwhile Putin was able to use the chaotic situation in the North Caucasus to justify an extremely far-reaching recentralisation of power that would directly impact the economic realm and justify his renationalisation of many key industries, limiting the potential for alternatives to state-led investment and condemning those regions not bequeathed with natural resources to stagnation and underemployment.

Returning to the current state of research on authoritarian consolidation, we have seen in the literature review that one of the principal problems facing leaders of authoritarian

and totalitarian states is to minimise intra-elite conflict, which is typically the gunpowder that can blow such regimes apart. There are multiple strategies for managing this that have been identified, from using ruling parties distributing patronage on a rotating basis and lengthening time horizons, as with the PRI in Mexico (Magaloni, 2006), or building a powerful organisational base to limit the emergence of powerful counterelites (Levitsky and Way, 2010). Alternatively on the most reductionist level, reliance on terror and coercion can eliminate alternative elites (Conquest, 1990), although this option is evidently extremely expensive and presupposes in some sense the ability of the ruler to command an extensive coercive apparatus, which seems rather to put the cart before the horse in terms of our interest in regime consolidation. All of these strategies rely principally on material appeals to the well-being of elites, utilising the distribution of resources, or the implicit or explicit threat of force. While these are compelling and sadly undoubtedly effective, they provide us with a rather limited purview and given the evidence presented below seem to miss one of the fundamental tools at the disposal of incoming authoritarian leaders.

This paper is specifically addressed to resolving this problem. Our finding here is that the weaknesses of the initial regime can provide leaders with a compelling ideational basis to minimise elite conflict and generate burgeoning support in critical constituencies, opening space to sideline dangerous opponents. Putin went from a near-nonentity at the time of his being named to the Prime-Ministership to comfortably winning the March Presidential Elections a mere nine months later, largely as the result of his determination to crush the Chechen resistance and willingness to impress on the Russian public the importance of reinvigorating the central governing apparatus. This provided him with the political capital to sideline obstreperous regional leaders and ultimately leech away the political power of the leading oligarchs. Stalin sidelined Trotskii and Bukharin through careful demonstrations of the fundamental problem with the New Economic Policy and its close links with the potential for re-emergence of capitalism and was subsequently able to use this to purge local parties who acted as scapegoats for their failures to meet extraordinarily demanding grain quotas.

In both cases, the fact that Putin and Stalin identified serious weaknesses with the original settlement and actively sought to correct these provided both leaders with critical legitimacy that they were able to leverage to overwhelm opponents and remove the threat of intraelite splits.

We see that the impact of ‘failed’ frameworks is not simply that these create substantial social welfare costs for the population as a result of the compromises and vacillations that accompany them, as demonstrated in the first two papers. This paper exposes a potentially much more damaging impact of such situations, namely that they present leaders with strong authoritarian or totalitarian tendencies with the basis on which to launch an attack on all viable opposition, dramatically lessening the prospects for either an elite split or moderation that could lead to democratisation. This theoretical insight needs greater development and elucidation, but that will have to wait for a subsequent paper. For now, having outlined the fundamental theory of this paper and examined the literature, we can now move to a justification for the case selection and then proceed to the empirical substance of the current work.

### 4.3 Case Selection

As in the first two papers, we maintain the same methodological approach for this final paper, although the time period has now shifted forward by a few years. We are thus engaged in a diachronic comparison of the Stalin period from 1927-1935 with the Putin period of rule from 2000-2008<sup>8</sup>. The methodological gains from conducting this mode of comparison have been explicated at length in the preceding two papers so we refer the interested reader to the discussion contained therein. Instead, we focus our energies on demonstrating that this is a

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<sup>8</sup>We shall not take into account the third of Putin’s presidential terms, which began in May 2012, simply because the trends are too fresh to permit sensible analysis. It does seem as though the system of Putinism has been badly shaken given the rise of popular protests and sustained splits in the elite (the chief ideologist of the system of managed democracy, Vladislav Surkov, was fired on the 7th of May, supposedly at the behest of hardliners (Осипов and Баданин, 8th May, 2013)) that have characterised his second period in the Kremlin.

justifiable comparison that allows us to consider the legacies and mistakes of the ideational frameworks investigated in the preceding papers.

This paper has the narrowest focus of the three in terms of giving great prominence to Joseph Stalin and Vladimir Putin as individual leaders who were instrumental in forging the consolidation of the Soviet and post-Soviet regimes. We should stress that the regimes that Stalin and Putin consolidated differed markedly from those that came before, highlighting the problem with this research programme that we discussed briefly in the preceding section. Putin arguably offers the greatest contrast with what he inherited, moving away from the somewhat ‘feckless pluralism’ of the Yeltsin years to a structure that was, at best, competitive authoritarian by the time of his switching to the Prime-Ministerial position in 2008 (Carothers, 2002; Levitsky and Way, 2010). His project of remaking and strengthening the state pervaded all aspects of life in Russia, from the renationalisation of central enterprises to stripping away the exceptions made for republics during Yeltsin’s ‘parade of sovereignties’ (Treisman, 1997). Stalin’s consolidation is more controversial, with continuing arguments as to whether he was merely continuing the pattern established by Lenin during the early years of Bolshevik rule or engaging in a radical shift to a markedly more totalitarian state (Service, 2005). While this debate is undeniably important for scholars of the Soviet Union, for our purposes we can direct our attention to how Stalin used the serious economic problems facing the Soviet Union to definitively crush the New Economic Policy and set the Soviet Union on the path to industrialisation and centralised planning to a qualitatively greater extent than had been seen in the years of War Communism. Stalin would use this to eliminate any regional resistance and dropped the vilification of ‘Great Russian Chauvinism’ that had been at the heart of early Bolshevik nationalities policy (a policy that he was instrumental in forging).

The relative narrowness of this paper’s focus should not distract from the fact that its thematic scope represents a combination and continuation of the work in the first two papers. To be more specific, we are interested in this paper in how Stalin and Putin’s administrations



developed policies in the realms of state- and nation-building and the economy. While we shall evidently be unable to go into the same amount of detail given that we are covering these two major policy areas for two different administrations, our interest here is in how they utilised the failures of the preceding regime to burnish their own credentials and remake the central policies of their regimes anew. There is an undeniable problem in the sense that Stalin was central to the design of nationalities policy for the early Bolsheviks while Putin was totally uninvolved in the early years of Yeltsin's rule, but the rise to prominence of Stalin in the period under study entails that the periods under study bear sufficient resemblance to make the comparison sensible. Most critically for our purposes, both men confronted regimes that had significant weaknesses and utilised these weaknesses to strengthen their position and undermine that of their chief rivals.

For our evidence, in the first period we draw primarily on Stalin's *Complete Works*, which are markedly less complete than Lenin's, finishing as they do in 1934 before the years of true terror were unveiled. For Putin, we look at some of his central speeches and remarks, although the fact that this is such recent history means that the secondary literature is inevitably thinner and less substantive than for Stalin. There is, however, more than enough (in my opinion) to tip the balance in favour of the argument advanced here. And without further ado, we can now proceed to said evidence.

## 4.4 Stalinism

We have already spent some time in the first paper looking at the work of Joseph Dzhughashvili, or Stalin, in terms of his contribution to the Bolshevik nationalities policy of the Soviet Union. For this paper, as he is one of the two central actors, it seems appropriate to spend a little more time developing our knowledge of his life and thought. We shall see that while Stalin began the period after the death of Lenin largely supporting the New Economic Policy and upholding the nationalities policy developed in the early period of Bolshevik rule, the critical

turning point occurred around 1927. At this juncture, he began to castigate the architects and supporters of the New Economic Policy as effectively supporting the re-emergence of capitalism in the Soviet Union and openly declared war on the kulaks<sup>9</sup>. This policy was in many respects remarkably similar to that of War Communism examined in the second paper and had predictably and depressingly similar results, with spiralling levels of famine and growing resistance to Bolshevik rule. This resistance, particularly in the North Caucasus and Ukraine, provided the basis for Stalin to re-evaluate in a fundamental fashion the Soviet nationalities policy and he began to castigate local nationalism as a cover for capitalism, reneging on the programme of *korenizatsiia* that had seemed so promising in terms of generating local support, especially in the North Caucasus. By the end of the period of interest for this paper, the countryside had largely been collectivised and local nationalists vilified and the roots of the subsequent terror that would grip the country from 1937-1938 were very much evident.

Stalin, along with Adolf Hitler, is arguably one of the two most vilified figures in the twentieth century. Alan Bullock wrote an extensive biography comparing the lives of the two men and tracing the roots of their actions to their turbulent youths (Bullock, 1992), while Timothy Snyder's recent research has focused on estimating the precise number who died under each man's rule (Snyder, 2010). Both Hitler and Stalin were instrumental in developing the apogee of totalitarian rule and the terrifying costs associated with it. But our interest in this paper focuses primarily on how Stalin managed to consolidate his power in the Soviet Union, outmanoeuvring his rivals and crushing all forms of opposition in the Soviet Union. To be more specific, we shall direct our scholarly attention on how the incomplete situation in the Soviet Union in the years immediately after Lenin's death allowed Stalin to centralise power. The principal argument of this section is that the weak situation in the

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<sup>9</sup>The kulaks (kulak means 'fist' in Russian) were the class of independent peasants who owned their own land and typically hired labour to help farm it. As we have already seen in the second paper, the attempt to assign classes to the rural communities was inherently problematic and Fitzpatrick has demonstrated in compelling fashion just how elastic the notion of 'kulak' was, often relating more to Civil War allegiance than objective economic circumstances (Fitzpatrick, 1994).

economy provided Stalin with the leverage to dominate and reform all other aspects of Soviet life, including the nationalities policy that had earlier been his most substantial contribution to Bolshevik thought.

Stalin and Stalinism have not traditionally received a very sympathetic hearing from historians and political scientists. The early biographers of Stalin seem largely to have agreed with Lenin's characterisation of him as 'too coarse (слишком груб)' to be a successful General Secretary, lacking the intellectual and cultural refinement to be the leader of the Soviet Union (Lenin, 1982, 346). Isaac Deutscher characterised him as a plodding intellect, devoid of inspiration (Deutscher, 1966) and this was largely the view until the recent biography by Robert Service strove to introduce a more complex picture (Service, 2005). This was not helped by Stalin's continual efforts to paint himself as a mere disciple of Lenin and implementer of the latter's thoughts. Speaking about himself in the third person in December 1926, he claimed that 'there can be no question of any "theory" of Stalin...[Stalin] only strove to facilitate the complete triumph of Leninism in our Party' (Stalin, 1954*i*, 121).

Meanwhile Stalinism as a system was chiefly characterised in the political science and historical literature as dependent primarily on coercion and terror to function (Fainsod, 1963; Conquest, 1990), a school of thought which came to be known as the 'T-school'<sup>10</sup>. Much modern research continues to focus on the dynamics of terror, although the perspectives have become more nuanced and there is a greater appreciation that the Stalinist system was more complex than a single man defying the will of an entire people (Shearer, 2003). As the height of the 'Great Terror' (the 'Ezhovshchina') took place in 1937-1938 we shall not focus on these elements in this paper, although the roots are clearly discernible in Stalin's denunciations against the wreckers and saboteurs whom he blames for the failure to attain the hopelessly demanding targets. Nevertheless, Theda Skocpol is primarily correct when she identifies the continuing problems with the peasantry in the New Economic Policy as the main contributor

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<sup>10</sup>This has been countered in historical research by Sheila Fitzpatrick and Stephen Kotkin, among others, who have sought to investigate the extent to which Stalinist industrialisation and modernisation found high levels of societal support and thus garnered legitimacy (Fitzpatrick, 1979; Kotkin, 1995).

to the shift to Stalinist centralisation<sup>11</sup>, although this sidelines the importance of nationalist elements (Skocpol, 1979). As we have seen in the second paper, while the New Economic Policy proved somewhat ameliorative in terms of the peasant/Soviet relationship, it could not undo the damage of War Communism and the Bolsheviks were unable to extend the locus of their power to agricultural communities and was thus unable to induce the peasants to participate in the nationalised economy.

We shall begin by looking back at some of Stalin's writings that precede our period of interest, and then move largely chronologically through subsequent developments. Where possible, we shall keep economic and nationality policy distinct, although by the 1930s this distinction has altogether collapsed as Stalin blames local nationalism as providing a cover for the wreckers and saboteurs who are ensuring the impossible requisition targets cannot be met. We should also note at the outset that it was perhaps inevitable that the North Caucasus would provide one of the primary locations (along with Ukraine) for resistance to Stalin's policy of collectivisation. The first paper demonstrated that the region was a central battleground in the Civil War, with many local actors preferring to strike out on an independent path rather than side with either the Reds or the Whites. The Bolsheviks seemed to have carved a *modus vivendi* with many of the ethnicities by the end of 1926, but this would be shattered by the policy of collectivisation, which forced the fiercely independent farmers and communities to band together in gigantic common enterprises. The North Caucasus, with its temperate climate and fertile soil, was one of the first regions to be subjected to this attempt to rationalise and industrialise agricultural production as part of the general drive to increase the technological level of the Soviet Union. As with War Communism, this generated huge levels of unrest, particularly among the Cossack communities, leading to regular instances of terror and the ultimate abandonment of the policy of *korenizatsiia* that had been the central component of Stalin's initial nationalities

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<sup>11</sup>As Skocpol notes, 'by 1927 the peasants were marketing so little grain [for the state] as to cause a crisis situation' (Skocpol, 1979, 222).

policy in the early Bolshevik period.

We see that by 1921, Stalin had solidified his opposition to Trotskii, suggesting that the latter was conflating the needs of the working class as a whole with the needs of the army and arguing that it was wholly inappropriate to use the coercive practices of the military on the industrial proletariat (Stalin, 1953*b*, 7). Instead ‘conscious democracy’ should be used to persuade the proletariat of the wisdom of engaging in socialist methods of production in order to avert postwar catastrophe, for coercion would only generate distrust of Soviet power (Stalin, 1953*b*, 10). This represents Stalin’s attempts to undermine Trotskii in the eyes of Lenin, for Stalin recognised at the time that Trotskii was playing a far greater role in the building of the Soviet Union and had, in virtue of his leadership of the army, considerably greater prominence in the critical first acts of the Revolution. Stalin would outline his ideal understanding of the role of the Bolshevik Party in the Thirteenth Party Conference of January 1924, arguing that it must be a ‘monolithic organisation hewed from a single block, possessing a single will and in its work uniting all shades of thought into a single current of practical activities’<sup>12</sup> (Stalin, 1953*e*, 23).

However, barring his open attacks on Trotskii, Stalin in 1921 was largely an orthodox party member committed to the nationalities policy we outlined in the first paper. Thus he argued that the Party’s responsibility with regard to the non-Russian peoples was to develop strong communist organisations to facilitate their economic progress ‘while refraining from mechanically transplanting from central Russia economic measures that are suitable only for a different, higher stage of economic development’ (Stalin, 1953*a*, 26). At the Tenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party, speaking on the national question, he was also harshly critical of those Bolsheviks who ‘sometimes deviate towards Russian dominant-nation chauvinism’ (Stalin, 1953*h*, 40). He was also still firmly committed to the necessity of spreading revolution (Stalin, 1953*c*, 108), and defended the New Economic Policy, arguing that ‘releasing the productive

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<sup>12</sup>This was an extremely fractious meeting at which Stalin launched direct and explicit attacks on both Trotskii and Preobrazhenskii and took place days before the death of Vladimir Lenin.

energy of the small producer...will...put him in a position...in which he will be compelled to bring grist to the mill of the Soviet state' (Stalin, 1953*d*, 126).

By the Twelfth Congress of the Bolshevik Party in 1923, Stalin was already adopting a harsher line towards the New Economic Policy and accusing it of undoing much of the good of his nationalities policy, seeking to burnish his credentials as the primary successor to the ailing Vladimir Lenin. In particular, he accused the NEP of fostering 'not only Great-Russian chauvinism - it also fosters local chauvinism' (Stalin, 1953*f*, 244). As yet this did not result in a shift in the policy of educating the nationalities about Marxism in their native tongue and the concern about the re-emergence of Great-Russian chauvinism was far more obvious in these remarks, highlighting the new danger Stalin saw from the NEP that would develop more fully over the course of the next four years. He continued his line of attack at the Fourth Conference of the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks with Responsible Workers of the National Republics and Regions in June of the same year, railing against the 'nationalist tendencies which are developing and gaining strength in connection with the N.E.P.' (Stalin, 1953*g*, 315), something he connected with the growth of the bourgeoisie and a direct threat to the spread of Bolshevik power and saw as emblematic of the Rightist faction in the Bolshevik party<sup>13</sup>.

In 1925 Stalin openly pressed the Bolsheviks to focus their energies on the peasantry and the countryside because 'our industry, which is the basis of socialism and the basis of our regime, rests on the home market, the peasant market' (Stalin, 1954*b*, 29). Indeed, at this time he was arguing that the remnants of War Communism were still in place and must be eliminated in order to help develop the relationship between the peasantry and the proletariat that he saw as central for the stabilisation of the Soviet state (Stalin, 1954*h*, 159), whilst also suggesting that '[t]he vast masses of the peasantry must be organised in co-operatives...as a means of drawing peasant economy into the general system of socialist construction' (Stalin,

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<sup>13</sup>He accused the Leftist faction of being unwilling to yield to the demands of localities and thus threatening Bolshevik power by alienating important constituencies, especially in the border regions.

1954*h*, 159). 1926 marked what Stalin would call the second stage of NEP, namely the shift from agriculture to industrialisation (with a particular focus on heavy industry), which he tied to ‘ensuring the economic independence of our country’ (Stalin, 1954*c*, 129). This would set in motion the serious policies that would transform the Soviet Union, requiring as it did a significant increase in the level of external trade and a lowering of grain prices in order to ‘reduce to a minimum the seepage of surpluses from accumulation into the pocket of the private capitalist [i.e. the kulaks]’ (Stalin, 1954*c*, 134). This would effectively mark a continuation of the battles with the peasantry that had ravaged the years of War Communism and lead to further and extreme cases of famine. It would also definitively alter the Soviet nationality policy and generate a rehabilitation of the ‘Great Russians’, as we shall see below.

There is little doubt that the North Caucasus, in particular, was severely underindustrialised and primitive in terms of farming technology. The first tractors appeared in the Kabardino-Balkaria autonomous oblast in 1924, at a time when 51% of households reported that they were horseless. By 1927 there were 80 tractors and other items of farming machinery in the region, though the source neglects to cite how many of the locals actually had a sound working knowledge of such new technology (Бербеков, 1958, 60). Electrification, which had first appeared in the AO in 1921, continued throughout the 1920s along with the appearance of medium industry and factories (though as of 1927, industry would remain only 8% of the region’s economy) (Бербеков, 1958). However, the lack of qualified specialists and experience with large-scale projects entailed that many of these were seriously delayed, hopelessly overbudget or dramatically below the projected production level. Stephen Kotkin provides an extraordinary study of a later project in *Magnetic Mountain* (Kotkin, 1995), but an equally demonstrative example was the attempt to build a huge maize industrial combine in Beslan. This was recommended by the first five-year plan and was intended to provide tonnes of product for both the domestic and local market. However, as Cherdzhiev notes, ‘[t]he construction was significantly complexified by the absence of experience, [and] the extreme shortage of qualified engineers and labour’ (Черджи́ев, 1971, 106). Foreign

specialists were called in and attempted to use imported materials, but these often proved a poor fit and before the project was finished it was relocated to the other side of the town. Such cases were all too common in the drive to industrialise the country in such a remarkably short space of time and while Stalin and the Bolsheviks would often have cause to curse the bourgeois ‘wreckers and saboteurs’<sup>14</sup>.

However, the time for the fundamental shift in nationalities policy was still some way in the future. Terry Martin, undeniably the most important contributor to the debates surrounding Soviet nationalities policy, states that as of April, 1926 Stalin defended the policy of *korenizatsiia* and did not believe it exacerbated local nationalism. Indeed, he states that ‘the policy [*korenizatsiia*] was identified with [Stalin] personally and he backed it vigorously on numerous occasions’ (Martin, 2001, 232). The basis for the concern over this policy began, as Martin cogently demonstrates, with concerns in Ukraine but as we shall see, Stalin needed the economic basis to ultimately overthrow the earlier conception of nationality policy. Thus, by late 1927, Stalin had committed the Soviet Union to the policy of collectivisation although he acknowledged that the Soviet Union was ‘not likely to reach [the goal of full collectivisation] soon’ (Stalin, 1954*e*, 231), since this required a substantial level of capital investment that was beyond the Soviet Union at that time. Nevertheless, grain requisitions in 1927 were far lower than projected, in large part because the state price of grain was set at an aggressively low level, generating unsurprising reluctance on the part of the peasantry to part with their produce (Fitzpatrick, 1994). At the Fifteenth Party Congress in December 1927, Stalin argued that the slow rate of growth of agricultural production relative to industrial production reflected the disorganised and underdeveloped nature of the former industry and saw collectivisation as the solution. He remarked in his report to the Central Committee that ‘The way out is...to go over to collective cultivation of the land on the basis of a new and higher technique’ (Stalin, 1954*g*, 312-313).

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<sup>14</sup>The ‘Shakhty Affair’, which involved the show trial of 55 specialists involved in the Donbas mines in the spring of 1928, was a potent warning of both the stakes and the administrative means by which the targets would be met, if necessary (Fitzpatrick, 1974).



By January of 1928 it was becoming clear that the country was in a desperate situation, with widespread shortages in the grain accounts totalling (by Stalin's own admission) 130,000,000 poods<sup>15</sup> (Stalin, 1954*k*, 42). His proposed solution was forced requisition from the kulaks and dramatic increases in the collectivisation of farms<sup>16</sup>, though the exact model of collectivisation he was advancing was unclear at this stage and Fitzpatrick has suggested that the large-scale collective farms he seemed to have in mind bore little resemblance to the average kolkhoz in 1928, which was constituted by just twelve households (Fitzpatrick, 1994, 40). Nevertheless, this marked the effective end of the New Economic Policy<sup>17</sup>, representing the summation of trends we have observed over the preceding years and would entail a significant shift in the relation of the Bolshevik Party to the countryside; it is hardly surprising that this coincided with the launch of the first Five-Year Plan in 1929. In some ways it was not dissimilar to the excesses of War Communism in terms of forced requisitions from the peasantry and the predictably disastrous effects of such a policy; as Fitzpatrick notes, the initial step to collectivisation in the winter of 1929-1930 consisted largely in the confiscation of livestock and claiming these were now the property of the kolkhoz. The upshot was that '[a]s far as the peasants were concerned, collectivization was based on an original act of robbery' (Fitzpatrick, 1994, 4), guaranteeing widespread peasant resistance and the perception that forced membership of the kolkhoz was akin to a second serfdom. The process was also not simple and there was wide recognition of the deficits of many of the collective farms; the Chief Okrug Section of the Collective Farms of Kuban reported in March of 1928 that 75 of the 88 liquidated collective farms the previous year were closed on the basis of their inability to fulfill the grain requisitions and that 85 of the 88 did

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<sup>15</sup>A pood is roughly 16 kilos or 36 pounds.

<sup>16</sup>'[A]ll areas of our country, without exception, must be covered with collective farms (and state farms) capable of replacing not only the kulaks, but the individual peasants as well, as suppliers of grain to the state' (Stalin, 1954*d*, 9).

<sup>17</sup>Notwithstanding Stalin's protestations to the contrary, '[o]nly enemies of the Soviet regime can think of abolishing NEP' (Stalin, 1954*k*, 50).

not own a single tractor<sup>18</sup> (*Из Доклада Заведующего Окружной Секцией Колхозов 2-му Пленуму Кубанского Окружкома ВКП(б) о Колхозном Строительстве (14 марта 1928 г.)*, 1981). Moreover the dramatic upsurge in the number of collective farms was placing great pressure on the North Caucasus krai administration, which called for emergency measures to be taken in 1928 in order to conduct land surveys (землеустройство) of all the collective farms in the krai that had formed since April of that year (*Из Постановления 3-го Пленума Северо-Кавказского Краевого Исполнительного Комитета об Усилении Руководства Колхозным Строительством (25 июня 1928 г.)*, 1981). This was hardly surprising given the extraordinary growth in the region; in Kuban okrug, for example, the number of collectives had risen from 344 in 1926 to 1366 in October of 1928, a four-fold increase in two years (*Из Отчетного Доклада Кубанского Окружкома ВКП(б) 5-й Окружной Партийной Конференции о Росте Колхозов, Повышении их Доходности и Расслоении Крестьянских Хозяйств (8 января 1929 г.)*, 1981).

Having spent the preceding three years railing against Trotsky and the Left deviationists, in October of 1928, Stalin made his first explicit attack on the Right, which he characterises as the renouncement of communism in favour of social democracy (Stalin, 1954j). This is basically his undermining of those (such as Bukharin) who were attempting to defend the New Economic Policy from the attacks launched on it by Stalin in the preceding year<sup>19</sup>; Stalin characterises these people as effectively advocating ‘an enormous strengthening of the capitalist elements in our country’ (Stalin, 1954j, 235). He clarified this point in an extremely long speech given in April of 1929, accusing Bukharin of mischaracterising the New Economic Policy, focusing on freedom of trade but forgetting that ‘NEP is freedom for private trade within *certain limits...with the proviso that the role of the state as the regulator*

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<sup>18</sup>An appeal from the poor farmers (бедняки) of the village of Derbent in Timashevskii raion to the Kolkhoz Soviet illustrates the fact that this problem continued well into 1929; the farmers ask simultaneously to be grouped into a collective farm and claim that unless they are sent tractors by the autumn of 1929, the collective will be ‘unviable (нежизненный)’ (*Постановление Собрания Бедняков Поселка Дербентского Тимашевского Райна о Вступлении в Колхоз (5 июля 1929 г.)*, 1981, 49).

<sup>19</sup>Bukharin is explicitly linked with Rightist deviation (along with Tomskii and Rykov) by Stalin in January-February of 1929 (Stalin, 1954a).

*of the market is guaranteed*' (Stalin, 1955f, 46; emphasis Stalin's). This attack on Bukharin and the NEP reached its logical conclusion in December of 1929 when Stalin called for the Bolsheviks to 'eliminate [the kulaks] as a class, and to *replace* their output by the output of the collective farms and state farms' (Stalin, 1955a, 175); he argues that full dekulakisation is required for the success of the collective farms (Stalin, 1955a, 176).

This brings us to his famous article, *Dizzy with Success*, published in March 1930, where Stalin notes the extraordinary overfulfillment of the quotas and that '*the radical turn of the countryside towards socialism may be considered as already achieved*' (Stalin, 1955b, 197; emphasis Stalin's). He stresses that the Party members should not go overboard and in particular that collective farms should not be created by force because a central part of their success is their voluntary character and the Party must ensure not to alienate the peasantry (Stalin, 1955b). Thus, for example, members of the administration in Kabardino-Balkaria were acknowledged to have erred when they tried to enforce a complete (100%) level of collectivisation in certain areas, violating the supposedly voluntary nature of the policy (Бербеков, 1958, 68). Along similar lines, the Kuban okrug and Adigeyan Oblast committees were reprimanded by the North Caucasus krai administration for setting a target of full collectivisation for the autumn of 1930, nine months ahead of the schedule set by the krai. The krai highlighted that collectivisation in national oblasts (such as Adigeya) was particularly complex due to the lower levels of preparedness of such areas, meaning that with the exception of North Ossetia and Adigeya (which had already achieved greater than 50% collectivisation), these oblasts were excluded from the summer 1931 target and focus on the simple creation of kolkhozes, learning from the experience of the other okrugs and regions of the krai (Андреев, 1981). The leaders of the Adigeyan oblast ignored the protestations of the krai administrators and finished full collectivisation by the first few days of 1931 (*Сообщение о Завершении Сплошной Коллективизации в Адыгейской Автономной Области (15 января 1931 г.)*, 1981).

However, Stalin highlights that collectivisation in the North Caucasus is expected to be

complete by the spring of 1931<sup>20</sup>, making it one of the first regions to achieve this dubious honour (along with the Middle and Lower Volga regions) (Stalin, 1955*d*, 213). This was largely achieved, since by this time around 73% of peasants in the region were living in collective farms (Shimotomai, 1983)<sup>21</sup>, though not without serious resistance from the local communities; Martin recounts that the Red Army was sent into Chechnya, Ingushetia, Karachai-Cherkessia and Dagestan to put down resistance in 1930 alone, forcing the Soviet government to temporarily suspend the process of collectivisation and dekulakisation but also fuelling the concerns about the unreliability and disloyalty of the region (Martin, 2001, 294-295).

However, as late as March 1929 Stalin was still upholding his line on nationalities policy, responding to criticism from various leading Bolsheviks (including Meshkov and Kovalchuk) that the socialism in one country would in fact not lead to the process by which ‘national languages...die away...nations will be merged, and in place of the national languages one common language will emerge’ (Stalin, 1954*f*, 357). This melting away of differences will only take place once the global socialist victory has been secured, but Stalin sees this as occurring many years hence and in the meantime the responsibility of the Party is to ‘support...the development and flourishing of the national cultures of the peoples of our country’ (Stalin, 1954*f*, 369). The commitment to education and cultural advancement of local populations was continuing at an impressive pace at this stage; the four years from 1925-1929 saw a fivefold increase in the graduates from ‘likpunkty’ (adult education centres designed to ‘liquidate’ illiteracy) in Kabardino-Balkaria. Meanwhile the number of elementary schools would rise from 167 in 1927 to 250 by 1931, with the number of students over the corresponding period rising from 10,890 to 32,000 (Бербеков, 1958, 97-101). Moreover the first

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<sup>20</sup>In November of 1929, the North Caucasus krai administration declared itself in full agreement with an earlier decision along the same lines by the Central Committee and directed all efforts to finishing collectivisation by the summer of 1931 (*Из Постановления Бюро Северо-Кавказского Крайкома ВКП(б) о Сплошной Коллективизации на Северном Кавказе (27 Ноября 1929 г.)*, 1981).

<sup>21</sup>Kabardino-Balkaria would attain a level of 96% of peasant agriculture passing through the 146 collective and 21 state farms (which controlled virtually all farmland in the region) by 1933 (Бербеков, 1958).

dedicated publishing house for the Balkar and Kabard tongues was opened in 1929. Martin notes that it was precisely around this time that the problems with local nationalists in Ukraine would convince Stalin that the danger of local nationalism was outweighing that presented by Great-Russian Chauvinism (Martin, 2001, 240).

Thus, by the Seventeenth Party Congress, Stalin was explicitly warning that local nationalism was a front for capitalism and terming nationalism the ‘adaptation of the internationalist policy of the working class to the nationalist policy of the bourgeoisie’ (Stalin, 1955*e*, 368-369). At this stage, Stalin equates Great-Russian Chauvinism as on a par with local nationalism in terms of the dangers for the Bolshevik project, completing the shift away from the initial nationalities policy he had outlined in the early years after the November Revolution and effectively signalling to local cadres and members of the OGPU (forerunner of the KGB) that local nationalists were no longer deserving of special protection.

Stalin reaffirmed these sentiments at the Sixteenth Party Congress of July 1930, warning against the danger of ‘deviating to Great-Russian chauvinism’ deploying the ‘national in form and socialist in content’ to explain the thinking behind this (Stalin, 1955*c*, 379-380). By this point, however, the close link between local nationalists and the NEP was established in the minds of leading Bolsheviks and a series of show trials of local nationalists had already taken place, with the most prominent being that of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine from March 9 to April 19, 1930 (Martin, 2001, 249ff).

This would be eclipsed by the appalling famines that would dog the region in 1931-1932 (and the Ukraine as well), prompted by a failure to meet the hopelessly optimistic grain quotas<sup>22</sup> and a demand from Stalin to increase terror rather than relax the quotas to resolve the problem (Martin, 2001, 296). Not content with railing against bourgeois ‘wreckers’ as the reason for problems with the implementation of the drive to industrialisation, Stalin would turn his ire to the agricultural sector and the consistent underperformance relative to

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<sup>22</sup>The levels in the North Caucasus were among the highest in the Soviet Union; in 1930 38% of grain production was delivered to the state and in the *kolkhoz* sector this was an astonishing 63.4% in 1931 (Shimotomai, 1983), shortly preceding the famine of the following year that would provoke Stalin’s ire.

planned output, talking of the ‘section of the counter-revolutionaries...in the North Caucasus...striv[ing] to create something in the nature of collective farms, using them as a legal cover for their underground organisations’ (Stalin, 1955*g*, 233). He would link this to the ‘wreckers’ who had long been accused of impacting industrial production since the Shakhty affair. The situation was indeed dire in 1932; by October in some districts of the North Caucasus only 2-3% of the monthly plan had been achieved and the peasants were actively slaughtering horses and destroying machinery in protest at the desperate situation (Shimotomai, 1983, 44-45), which resulted in a continuation of the catastrophic situation in 1933. This generated a response from the centre in terms of the so-called ‘Kuban Affair’<sup>23</sup>, with widespread purges of the party (over 40% of members were stripped of membership), total bans on trading to alleviate the situation, mass arrests<sup>24</sup> and even deportation of three entire villages to the North (Shimotomai, 1983). This prompted a fundamental re-evaluation of *korenizatsiia* (and specifically Ukrainisation) in Ukraine and the North Caucasus; the policy was blamed for enabling kulaks and other malicious elements to erect counter-revolutionary cells and even occupy high-level positions in the local administration. By 1933, all the pieces were in place for the ultimate shift to the Great Terror and the associated full-scale deportations of entire ethnicities that would devastate the North Caucasus during the years of the Second World War.

We see from our overview of the Stalinist period that the critical turning point was the year 1927, when Stalin openly called for attacks on the kulaks and encouraged the widespread policy of collectivisation that would underwrite the Soviet industrialisation drive. The hopelessly optimistic requisition quotas were missed, generating claims of kulak interference and ‘wrecking’ that would ultimately be tied to local nationalism, marking the end of the genuine push for *korenizatsiia*. The Kuban Affair was the most notable but hardly the only case of widespread resistance in the North Caucasus and the eventual deportation of four entire

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<sup>23</sup>Kuban was, and remains, a predominantly Cossack region.

<sup>24</sup>16,000 peasants were arrested in Kuban by the OGPU during the 1932 campaign (Martin, 2001, 300).

ethnicities from the region during the Second World War was a reflection of the irreparable damage done to the relationship between the Soviet authorities and the peoples of the region during this period. From Stalin's perspective, however, the failure of NEP provided him with valuable ammunition to discredit Bukharin and the Right opposition; having already dealt with the Left opposition and Trotskii this provided him with near-absolute power in the Soviet Union from the mid-1930s onwards and the basis to launch the Great Terror.

## 4.5 Putinism

Having completed our overview of the Stalinist period, we can shift to our investigation of Vladimir Putin and the system he unveiled during his first two terms in office. The central claim of this section is that Putin's principal focus was on correcting the weakness of the post-Soviet state; from his perspective, all associated problems flowed from the enervation of the central structure of governance. Given what we learned in the first paper concerning the failure of Yeltsin and his team to articulate a coherent platform for state- and nation-building, it should not be tremendously surprising that this was the centrepiece for Putin's remaking of the post-Soviet system; his first act was to declare a Second Chechen War and he would then move rapidly to limit the powers of the regions, replacing local leaders with whom he disagreed. This would ultimately conclude with a direct attack on the powers of the various republics and a partial remaking of the economic reforms undertaken by Yegor Gaidar, with the renationalisation of key industries in the hands of the state.

Unlike with Joseph Stalin, to this point in the project we have not had cause to mention Vladimir Putin as his role in the Yeltsin period prior to the endgame was, at best, peripheral. Richard Sakwa, in the closest work we have to an English-language biography of Putin, notes the formative influence of his time in the KGB in East Germany during the twilight years of the Soviet Union but despite holding important positions in government, he was almost entirely unknown before his nomination to the Premiership by Yeltsin in August

1999 (Sakwa, 2004). Tim Colton notes that the attraction for Yeltsin in naming Putin as his successor-in-waiting was his militaristic demeanour and discipline, that Yeltsin believed would help return Russia to the path of reform; Putin was also recommended by Yeltsin's chief of staff in the summer of 1998 (Colton and McFaul, 2004, 175). He was hardly unique in that sense, since Yeltsin had run through a succession of former military men in the Prime Minister's post and found them all wanting (Colton, 2008, 433). On his appointment, few thought that Putin would be any different from the previous men who had held the post, but Putin's rise to power was astonishing, moving from polling two percent in August 1999 to comfortably winning over fifty percent in the 2000 Presidential election and thus avoiding a run-off (Colton and McFaul, 2004, 173).

It is certainly true that at the outset, Putin cast himself as a man focused on solving Russia's many problems rather than the type of individual who enjoys abstract debates over ideology. He excluded himself from the televised debates between candidates and shunned campaigning<sup>25</sup> (Colton and McFaul, 2004). In his *Open Letter to the Russian Voters*, which was published in February 2000, Putin dismisses the importance of ideology, writing that 'I am convinced that the basic feature of the new century will be not the battle of ideologies, but sharp competition for quality of life, national wealth and progress' (Путин, 25 February, 2000). However, even in this letter we can see that this isn't an entirely accurate portrayal of his position, since he states that his starting point (отправная точка) for his programme is to defend the state and he identifies the loss of state will as the fundamental challenge facing Russia at this time, leading to hesitations and the delaying of key decisions (Путин, 25 February, 2000). This was to be the hallmark of his presidency and the fulcrum around which everything else revolved.

Chechnya was the basis on which Putin would begin his path to the presidency and his remaking of the bargain between the local and federal level. Emil Pain has documented the

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<sup>25</sup>He even claimed that his working schedule allotted no special time for campaigning, implying that he was too busy running the country to concern himself with such trivialities ('Специальных предвыборных мероприятий в моем рабочем графике нет') (Путин, 25 February, 2000).



remarkable shift in public preference for a military solution, with a doubling of support from October, 1995 to November 1999 (20.4% to 53.1%) (Pain, 2005, 69), largely the result of a propaganda campaign launched by Putin shortly after taking Prime-Ministerial office<sup>26</sup>. The start of formal hostilities was in August of 1999 when Russian troops entered Dagestan to repel Shamil Basaev and Amir ibn Al-Khattab (Evangelista, 2002), who were the leaders of the Islamist insurgency in the region, although as Ilyas Akhmadov notes there had been skirmishes in the region beginning in June of that year<sup>27</sup> (Akhmadov and Lanskoj, 2010). Aslan Maskhadov, the official President of Chechnya, sought to distance himself from these attacks but his position was too weak to allow him to arrest the ringleaders (Akhmadov and Lanskoj, 2010, 161), which was Putin's effective ultimatum to avoid further hostilities from the Russian side. The Second Chechen War began in earnest on the 30th of September, 1999 following Maskhadov's failure to meet Putin's demands. The success of and support for this action, which was authorised by Yeltsin but largely reflected Putin's desire to resolve the situation in Chechnya, allowed Putin to consolidate his position and ultimately ease to victory in the Presidential Election, as seen above.

Putin described Chechnya as having been 'occupied by a criminal world and transformed into its fortress' (Путин, 25 February, 2000), connecting his counterterrorist activities in Chechnya with a general problem facing Russia society. Indeed, Pavel Baev has argued that the counterterrorist efforts in Chechnya were central to Putin's strategy for regime consolidation, noting that Putin's decisions to centralise the Interior Ministry units of OMON and SOBR were greatly facilitated by the conflict and served to curb the power of regional governors (Baev, 2004). He argues that what was critical for Putin was to ensure that for Chechnya to serve the purpose of justifying Putin's recentralisation of executive power,

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<sup>26</sup>The series of apartment bombings in early September, 1999 were absolutely central for demonstrating the threat from Chechnya and terrorism could not be confined to the republic although, as Amy Knight has detailed in a review of John Dunlop's book, there are worrying signs of FSB involvement in the bombings themselves (Knight, 2012).

<sup>27</sup>Akhmadov was the Foreign Minister for the Republic of Ichkeria (the official name for the Chechen territory in the locality) at the time but there is little reason to doubt his account of the facts of events surrounding the build-up to the Second Chechen War.

it must be extended beyond the confines of a merely regional conflict, which is why the counterterrorism angle is so vital. Putin himself in a press conference from the 18th of June, 2001, stated that the initial withdrawal of all federal troops from Chechnya was a ‘humiliation’, that Chechnya soon became a base for the ‘criminal mastery (освоение) of the economy of Russia’ and that the fundamental issue for the Russian government prior to the outbreak of the Second Chechen War was not the independence of Chechnya, but whether ‘Chechnya could be used as a foothold (платформ) for attacks on Russia’ (Путин, 18 June, 2001a).

Putin’s plan to remake the federal bargain was thus a central part of his governing platform and as Petrov and Slider note, one of Putin’s first major policy initiatives in this regard was to recentralise power and limit the autonomy of the regions through the creation of seven federal districts in May 2000 (the North Caucasus would initially be included in the Southern District but would gain its own federal district in 2010 by decree of Dmitry Medvedev). The heads of these districts had specific responsibility for extirpating inconsistencies between local and federal laws that were a major source of regional power (Petrov and Slider, 2007). Although the simple fact of ‘correcting’ laws was perhaps largely a formal exercise, the fact that Putin signalled this as one of his principal policy priorities so early in his first term demonstrated to the regional leadership that the *laissez-faire* compromises that had governed relations with the centre would no longer be the guiding principle. He also removed the heads of the republic from their automatic seats in the Federation Council (the second chamber of Russia’s parliament), denying them the direct link to Moscow and parliamentary immunity that many treasured.

However, Putin went further than simply limiting the powers of the heads of republics. Chechnya was again the touchstone for action, and when Ruslan Aushev, the popular leader of Ingushetia, publicly criticised Putin and the conduct of the Chechen War in December 2001, he was swiftly asked to resign and replaced by Murat Zyazikov, a former-KGB agent with strong ties to Moscow. Zyazikov quickly developed a reputation for enriching himself

and his circle in ‘sweeps’ of local Ingush youth and was widely despised by the local population. This represented the start of Putin’s policy in the region of overlooking egregious behaviour in favour of absolute loyalty and would reach its apogee when Ramzan Kadyrov, the son of the assassinated former mufti of Chechnya, Akhmad Kadyrov, was appointed effective head of the republic in November of 2005. Putin has basically deferred management of the republic to Kadyrov, taking little interest in the means by which he enforces order and eliminates ‘threats’. This has led one Russian expert to describe Kadyrov and Putin as mutual ‘hostages [заложники]’ (Малашенко, 2009, 34); Kadyrov is dependent on Putin for subsidies, while Putin has entirely relinquished any interest in local Chechen matters following the aftermath of the Beslan tragedy, where a group of Islamist fighters took hundreds of schoolchildren hostage in a desperate and futile attempt to wring concessions from the federal authorities. The North Caucasus has subsequently been marked by a continuous and low-level insurgency that is largely localised and seemed to be of little interest to Putin prior to 2008 (Hahn, 2007).

If we consider the economy, as Åslund notes, at the beginning of his term Putin made noises that he would continue on the path of economic reform surrendered by Yeltsin during the last years of his presidency (Åslund, 2007). Admittedly he inherited a restarted reform programme in the aftermath of the crushing default in 1998 under the Primakov government, but the tax system was hopelessly byzantine and the regions remained in control of large amounts of revenue, often hiding revenue from the incompetent and corrupt central tax administrators. A major focus of reform was thus to reduce the number of taxes from over 200 at the end of 1999 to just 16 in 2004, vastly limiting the scope for regional variation and dramatically simplifying the work for the tax collectors (Åslund, 2007, 216). Taxes were also lowered significantly; a personal flat tax of 13% was introduced and the corporation tax was reduced from 35% to 24% and almost all state revenue was drawn from four taxes that Easter has called the ‘most lucrative and easiest to collect’ (VAT, excise, profits and user fees on raw materials) (Easter, 2006, 41). In his first ‘Direct Line’ multihour televised interaction

with the Russian people, Putin criticises local monopolies and argues that housing benefits should flow directly from the central state to the people<sup>28</sup> and also argues that the state is too weak to uphold basic laws concerning the privatisation of land<sup>29</sup>, leading Putin to push for the strengthening of the ‘power vertical’.

However, Putin’s most famous contribution to the economy has undoubtedly been his largely successful battle to tame the oligarchs, who largely ran rampant in the later years of Yeltsin’s rule following the extraordinary loans-for-shares deal that guaranteed Yeltsin’s second presidential victory (Colton, 2008). He began his presidency by running Boris Berезovskii out of the country and relieving Vladimir Gusinskii of his NTV television station but his most famous action was the dismemberment of YUKOS and the imprisonment of its CEO Mikhail Khodorkovskii and his chief aide Platon Lebedev in 2003 following the former’s rather ill-advised attempt to venture into politics (though this probably had more to do with lobbying over tax on oil than Khodorkovskii’s support for doomed liberal candidates) (Sixsmith, 2010). Balzer has argued convincingly that Putin’s drive to sideline Khodorkovskii was motivated in large part by the desire to ‘use control of energy resources to build up Russia’s economy and to reassert its influence in the world’, reflecting Putin’s own thoughts on the matter as expressed in the economic research he conducted<sup>30</sup> and published in the mid-1990s (Balzer, 2005, 212).

This story is justly famous and ongoing, but the central point for our purposes is that the basis for the arrest of Khodorkovskii was charges of tax evasion and it would have been extremely difficult for Putin’s administration to piece everything together without the fundamental strengthening of the state that had taken place beforehand. The state subsequently effectively nationalised YUKOS’s assets through Rosneft, tying the Russian budget even

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<sup>28</sup>‘[Н]ужно начать с того, деньги, которые и сегодня государство выделяет...шли не предприятиям-монополистам на места...а шли непосредственно людям’ (Путин, 24 December, 2001*b*).

<sup>29</sup>‘[Государство] не в состоянии проводить в жизнь те решения, которые формально заложены в законе’ (Путин, 25 February, 2000).

<sup>30</sup>Or paid someone to conduct; the Russian academic system is hardly free of scandal in this regard. But the point stands that Putin was willing to put his name to the research, regardless of how extensive his involvement was.

more closely to the price of oil and saving significant problems for future governments.

## 4.6 Conclusion

This final paper in the dissertation has investigated the difficulties and opportunities presented to certain individuals who are in unusual positions to consolidate regimes that have completely overthrown the old order. Seizing on the inadequacies of first-generation governments in the economic and state-building sphere respectively, Stalin and Putin were able to reforge the initial settlement and exert overweening influence on subsequent developments in their particular country. The papers on state-building and economics demonstrated that the absence of coherent, clear and flexible frameworks can be devastating in the immediate period of post-imperial overthrow. We have seen in the first paper that the failure to articulate a platform for nation- and state-building under Yeltsin generated huge problems in the North Caucasus, leading to extraordinary levels of unemployment and conflict between the ethnic republics that the central government proved unable to resolve in a satisfactory manner. For the Bolsheviks, the state-building system was integral to building support in the North Caucasus and limiting the threatened explosion of violence, but in the economic realm the switching between the radical War Communism and the more moderate New Economic Policy provoked widespread resentment and an impossible situation with regard to the peasantry, who were of incalculable importance for the early Bolshevik economy.

This paper has looked at the long-term implications of these initial problems and found them to be devastating. We have seen that from 1923 onwards, Stalin used the uncertainty over economic policy to buttress his drive for centralisation in all aspects, from the collectivisation of farms to a complete restructuring of the Bolshevik nationality policy. Putin was able to use the chaos of Chechnya to launch his presidential bid, then expand the conflict to make broad claims about the necessity of pursuing counterterrorism through strengthening the state and limiting the power of regional bodies. Emasculating these local power brokers

facilitated his seizing control of key assets and his sidelining of the oligarchs with political pretensions, effectively negating all real alternatives to his rule. Thus we see that the impact of failed frameworks has both short- and long-term implications for those states unfortunate enough to experience them, providing further ballast to our claims that the energies of the scholarly and policy communities would be well-spent on correcting the deficits in contemporary democratic theory that give rise to such problems.

The post-imperial environments facing the Soviets and post-Soviets were in many ways so overwhelming that perhaps we should be more astonished by their successes than failures given the complete absence of a foundation on which either regime could build. This is, however, cold comfort and our challenge as scholars is surely to diagnose and seek to prevent the worst excesses of Stalinism and Putinism that resulted from the problematic legacies they inherited. This dissertation project has sought to illuminate the processes by which these legacies were formed and developed and this final paper has considered the implications of this. The positive task, of understanding how to mitigate the outcome of such situations, much be left for future research.

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